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DAUGHTER
IN
POSSESSION
BY
ROSA
MULHOLLAND

The Daughter in Possession

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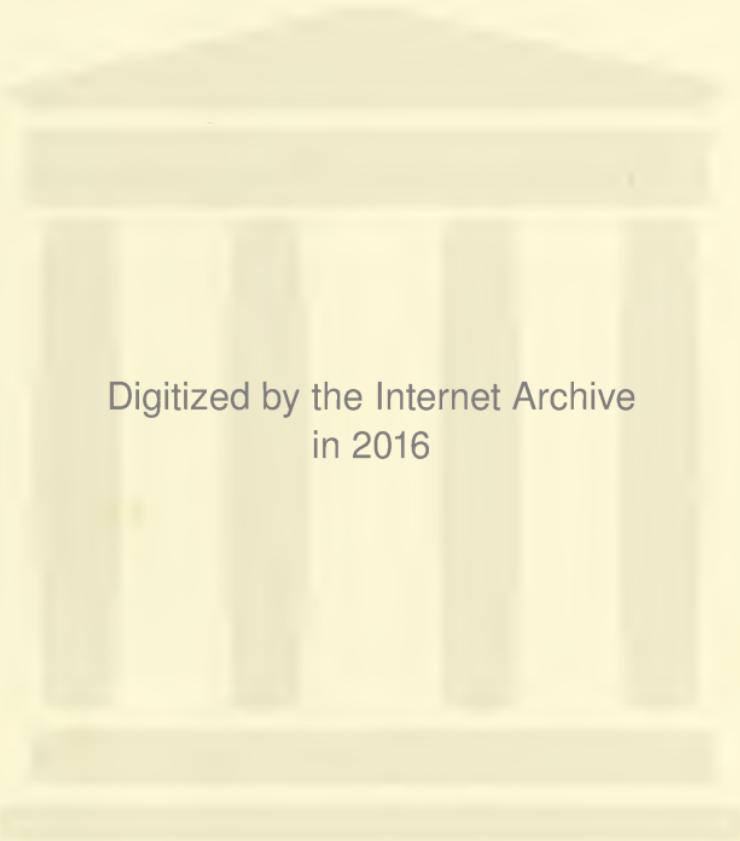
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"'I'M GLAD I DID IT, SIR, BUT I COULDN'T HELP IT; SO YOU NEED
NOT THANK ME'"

The Daughter in Possession

The Story of a Great Temptation

BY

ROSA MULHOLLAND

Author of "Old School Friends" "Twin Sisters"
"Fair Noreen" &c. &c.

Illustrated by G. Demain Hammond, R.I.

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THE DAUGHTER IN POSSESSION

CHAPTER I

At a London Crossing

A GIRL was standing alone in a crowded thoroughfare in the neighbourhood of the London docks—a small creature with keen, bright eyes, a heap of dark hair, no hat, toes out of her shoes, a thin cotton frock clinging to her slender limbs and narrow shoulders. She was absorbed in expectation of something, keeping a steady outlook towards the far side of the crossing, which, however, she made no attempt to cross.

People passing bade her get out of the way, and pushed her about. One rough man in a hurry knocked her down, and did not stop to pick her up. But she was quickly on her feet again and at her post, her little neck stretched and her head held high, her eyes straining to catch sight of someone taller than herself, who would be coming towards her through the crowd on the opposite side of the crossing.

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It was in a part of London devoted to the very poor, where existence means an endless monotony of work, where few men and women follow any special craft, and the breathless effort to do something to sustain life exhausts the nervous system and drains the heart. The little girl at the crossing looked like an incarnation of this spirit of tense nerve effort, her eyes shining like steel, the whole of her, as she strained forward and jerked about, suggestive of some clever piece of machinery.

It was not a place where well-dressed people were likely to be seen. The hour was six o'clock on a summer evening. The crowd was chiefly of men in toil-stained clothes, with smirched hands and faces, and of women recklessly untidy or pathetically clean, all branded on the brows with the sign manual of poverty.

Most of them were on the way back from overgrown factories or dockside warehouses to miserable lanes somewhere among the comfortless rows of streets, where roofs of houses looked hopelessly hard and forbidding against a bare sky, void of any further visible distance to break up or soften lines so rigid and so unlovely.

The roar and grind of motor vans and lorries rushing past, with or without loads of merchandise, warned the little girl to venture no farther than the spot where she stood, and she remained fixed to it, as a vantage ground from which she could see far ahead along the street that gave on the crossing from the opposite side.

While she waited with patient determination, one of those things happened which are the sinister

shadows of tragedies rapidly approaching, but fortunately not allowed to arrive.

Sauntering along the street on the same side of the crossing was a man, evidently of a class different from that of the ordinary man of that crowd, well-dressed, with a dark face and square shoulders, walking erect with a swing of conscious prosperity—a “real West-ender”, as somebody said passing him. He looked a man of solid substance, with an air of momentary absent-mindedness, a cloud of dreams in the eyes, and a buzz of dreams in the voice, as he hummed to himself, unheard by any ears but his own in the din around him.

Arriving at the spot where the little girl was standing, he faced towards the crossing and jostled her, as many had already done. He did not see her. His eyes, full of dreams, were on the opposite side of the street, like her own, only his intention was to walk straight across, while hers was to remain where she stood.

After he had pushed her as she was accustomed to be pushed, she reeled round, and glanced at him without impatience, his action having merely drawn her attention to him, as he lurched forward on the crossing with the reckless movement of a person who has the habit of escaping danger by failing to perceive it.

If such were this man's habit, his escape was not ensured by it at this particular moment. A huge lorry, heavily laden, had also the intention of clearing that crossing, and a mechanical motor is more than a match for one of human flesh and bones. The man, in his dream, flung himself forward, the lorry

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rushed on its way, and in another second the two would have met, had not the little girl who had been pushed dashed after the man, seized him by the skirts of his coat, and pulled him backwards.

It was he who reeled now, roused from his dreams. There had been a roar and a shower of imprecations from the driver of the lorry, and cries from spectators who might be excused on such an occasion for sympathizing with the utterance of bad language. The West-ender, in his fine clothes, was cursed as a fool; but nobody had time to spend on his undeserved salvation from a horrible death, or on the lucky escape of the driver of the lorry from the trouble inevitably to follow on the killing of a man. The crowd hurried on, impending horror was forgotten, and the man of dreams was left standing on the verge of the crossing looking down at the small creature who had saved him.

“Little girl, you saved my life!” he said.

“You great stupid!” cried the girl; “anybody could have saved you.”

“Everybody wouldn’t have been so quick and so strong,” said the man.

“I only pulled your coat tails,” she said, scarcely vouchsafing him a glance, as she kept her eyes steadily fixed as before on the opposite side of the crossing.

“Turn round and look at me,” said the man. His voice had a rich musical sound, pleasant to listen to.

“I can’t,” said the girl. “I’m watching for Keefe. I watch for him every evening, and when he comes he takes me home.”

"But if Keefe comes along the side street opposite, we might go and meet him."

"Very well," she replied, as they crossed the street. "Only I generally watch from here."

"You must tell me more. Where is your home? How do you live? Whose daughter are you?"

"I'm nobody's daughter, and I live over there," said the girl, pointing with her thin arm extended, but without turning her head for a moment.

The man stood beside her, feeling unable to leave her. What could he do to gain her attention? Her unconsciousness of the service she had done him did not make it the less. How was he to reward this small saviour of a life of which he was not altogether tired? He observed her closely, the slight frame, the long thin neck and arms, the delicate features in profile, the keen dark eyes, and the mass of thick dark hair that made a sort of mantle for her scantily clad shoulders. He must do something, so that this eager and helpful little spirit should reap some benefit from her ready action. Who was Keefe? He would wait and see. He must find where "over there" was, the place where she had told him she lived.

In a few moments she uttered a sudden cry of joy, and clapped her hands.

"Keefe!" she cried in a shrill voice, and the man beside her looked eagerly to see the friend whose coming was so all-important, and the cause of so much pleasure.

A big boy, almost as tall as a man, was coming down the street. He had an unmistakably boyish face, soft and good-natured, with blue eyes, and a

shock of fair hair, fully displayed as he pulled off a dusty cap, smiling at the little figure awaiting him.

Here was Keefe. His clothes were grey tweed, and better than an ordinary workman's clothes, and he carried a parcel of papers under his arm.

"I'm late, Stine; and you've been waiting ever so long. I went with the papers—"

"What did he say? What did he say?" cried the girl impatiently.

"He said 'Good'; and he kept some of the drawings. But he says it will be uphill work, especially as Uncle is against it."

"Glorious!" said Stine. "You do uphill work—always—"

Here the man who had been saved thought he might speak.

"This little girl has saved my life," he said to the boy. "I want to know where she lives, and to do something to show my gratitude."

"Stine?" cried Keefe.

"I only pulled his coat when he was running into the lorry," said Stine. Now that her friend was beside her, the little dark face was transfigured by a radiant smile. "I'm glad I did it, sir; but I couldn't help it, so you needn't thank me."

"I want to see her parents," said the stranger.

"She hasn't any," said Keefe. "Mrs. Milsom, a very poor woman, keeps her among her own children. It's a long story, sir; but if you would like to see Mrs. Milsom you can come with us."

"I would like to see her," said the stranger; and they walked on together in the direction of the ugly

dwellings with the sharp, hard outlines against the bare evening sky.

As they walked the stranger asked questions, which Keefe had no hesitation about answering.

Mrs. Milsom's husband was living, but he was in a charitable Home. His disease was paralysis, depriving him of the use of his limbs, and a little affecting his brain. He had been a sailor, and it was in a shipwreck that he had picked up Stine, then a baby, and brought her home to his wife to be cared for among their own children. While he was swimming in ice-cold water he had struck a floating infant and carried it on with one arm towards a rescuing ship. Even the little nightgown had been washed off the child, and there was nothing to tell who she was. All the passengers except herself had been drowned. So Stine was indeed, as she had said, nobody's daughter. As the shipwreck happened on Christmas night they said she had brought her name with her from the sea, and had called her Christine, which in course of time had been conveniently shortened to Stine.

The experience of that terrible night had no doubt laid the foundation of poor Milsom's paralysis. He had been too long in the freezing water. It was a marvel that the baby had lived. Up to that time the poor Milsoms had been tolerably comfortable, for Joss always brought money home from his trips, and his wife was industrious. But after his first attack of illness Joss had been obliged to give up the sea. With the wonderful charity of the poor towards each other they had kept the little waif as their own. Joss had persistently refused to give her over to the work-

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house authorities, and the mother, who found three children too many to provide for by her single efforts, had continued to harbour the young stranger, even after her husband, who had sojourned for various periods in many hospitals, had gravitated at last into the Home.

Stine listened to the story as Keefe told it to the stranger, while all three threaded the streets, the little girl quickening her steps to keep pace with the long strides of her companions. She had heard it often, and knew all the particulars.

The only remark she made was:

“When I am grown big enough I will earn money for Mammy.”

The stranger looked down at her with a half-amused, half-pitying smile.

“I have no doubt you will do anything you put your mind to,” he said.

“She does a lot already,” said Keefe.

And then they came in sight of the house where the Milsoms lived. It was a high, gaunt house of the kind described as a tenement, once a fine country residence, when there had been fields where now were streets. It looked ready to fall down, and probably would not be allowed to stand much longer.

“It’s a poor place to go into, sir,” said Keefe, as they entered the dilapidated open door and began to ascend a crazy staircase.

CHAPTER II

Ten Hours at Fivepence

ALL the way up, as they climbed the staircase, there were open doors, or mere doorholes from which the doors had been torn away to make firewood, and of which the frames had been hacked and chipped for the same purpose. Within the rooms so exposed to view were groups of miserable toilers, working as if driven by a wind of desperate necessity at a variety of piecework tasks, to be paid for at starvation prices—portions of garments to be afterwards stitched together by other hands, “uppers” of shoes, buttonholes of cheap shirts, pasteboard boxes, coarse gaudy imitations of flowers, to be used for what purpose it would be hard to imagine.

Scarcely anyone visible within these wretched interiors looked up at the sound of feet passing on the landing outside. There was no time to spare for observation or speculation, and certainly no profit to be gained by it. The grinding task to be finished and to make way for another, the coppers to be paid into the aching hand, the shovelful of coal to be gained for the rough box beside the grate, the bit of bacon or margarine or the ounce of tea, the loaf of bread or the spoonful of sugar to be snatched from the world's grudging grip—these were the objects of existence, the desires of the soul, the cause of the hollow cough

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and the pains in the back or side, the reason for unkempt hair and unwashed hands and faces.

The man from the west stared appalled at these dwellings of the east revealed to him as he passed them by. Never had he dreamed of such misery. Anguish and despair were known to live in poetry and music, but no harmonious wailing or picturesque staging had any likeness to this grim and gruesome reality.

He checked all expression of dismay, seeing that his two companions tramped on and up as if the scenes they were passing through were the most common and natural in their everyday experience.

Quite at the top of the house they came to the abode of the Milsoms. Sitting before some old wooden boxes—"empties" from the grocers, serving her as a table—was the woman they had come to see. She looked up as the three visitors entered at the open door, and showed a face that might once have been pretty, but was so seamed with care and soured with hopeless suffering, so twisted out of all comely lines and curves by nervous irritation, that nothing was left on which imagination could attempt to reconstruct the possible beauty or the womanly sweetness of by-gone youth.

There were rents in her poor blouse, and dust lay on hair that was prematurely grey. She had no time to put stitches in her own garments, or to brush her fading locks. The days were past when these things had to be carefully thought of: now they were of no account. Nobody saw, and if anyone had seen no one would have cared. A garret to toil in, a little food, a little fire were the only things the jaded brain

could grasp as facts or fictions, as the case might be. All other necessities seemed forgotten, or remembered only when the ghosts of former comforts might rise and flit through the memory.

She was working buttonholes on coarse shirts with a jerking mechanical movement that looked as if it could go on for ever of itself without her will. At the sound of feet on the stair she just glanced up once. The sunset that reddened the rickety window fell on the three figures entering.

“Who is it, Keefe? Is it to hurry the work? I can’t get on any faster, not even if it was better pay.”

“It’s a gentleman to talk to you, Mrs. Milsom,” said Keefe, standing before her, cap in hand, with an air of as much respect as if she had been a great lady.

“I can’t talk. I can’t stop. You know I can’t. Tell him it’s a ha’penny an hour. Count it up to him. Ten hours a day is fivepence. There’s no bread on the shelf. I won’t take any more of your money, Keefe. You haven’t it for yourself. Tell him to go away, will you? Can’t he let us alone?”

The last words were said almost savagely. The stranger drew near the table and put a gold coin before her, just at her jerking hand under her down-cast eyes.

“That’s more than fivepence, ma’am. It’s twenty shillings and it’s yours. It isn’t to hurry the work. Please put down your sewing. I’ve bought an hour from you. I want to talk to you about this little girl.”

The woman stopped work and stared at him.

“What do you mean? Does the workhouse want to buy her?”

“Nobody wants to buy her. She saved me from

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being run down by a motor, and I want to do something for her. I want you to tell me about yourself and your husband."

The woman stared from one to another of the three faces before her.

"Stine's a good girl," she said. "She would do that; she's quick and clever. But who gives gold for anything nowadays? Look at it, Keefe! Is it real gold?"

"Real gold," said Keefe.

"Oh, Lord! Then we'll have something to eat before we lie down over there." There was one wretched mattress in a corner on the floor. "Run, Stine, and buy—you know what to buy——"

"Let me go," said Keefe. "It's bigger money than Stine ever saw. I'll get the change more safely."

He took up the sovereign and went out.

"You can trust him?" said the stranger.

"Trust Keefe? Aye!" said the woman, and a gleam came into her eyes that softened her face wonderfully, a faint flame starting from embers of a once generous fire and gone again in a moment.

"What is he to you?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Milsom, "except for kindness. He's Stine's friend. He picked her up when she fell in the gutter coming home from school. That was long ago, when my man was with me. He's in hospital now for good and all. You wanted to know about him, sir, for your money. He was always a good man, was my poor Joss. Keefe goes to see him and can tell you that he didn't leave me till his legs wouldn't carry him any longer and his head got queer——"

"Who are Keefe's people? Where does he live?"

"His uncle is a builder and is bad to him. Stine knows more about him than I do."

Stine spoke up.

"His uncle wants him to do nothing all his life but build ugly houses and put up boards to stick bills on, and Keefe wants to make beautiful buildings. He draws pictures of them, and a great man told him he would be a great architect if he studied and persevered. And sometimes Keefe thinks he will have to run away from his uncle; but he doesn't, because he wouldn't know where to go, and besides he says that his uncle brought him up when he was small and had nobody else to take care of him, and that he is growing old and wants him now."

"Two very good reasons," said the stranger, turning from the woman and looking at the child, whose face was now glowing with enthusiasm for her friend.

"What do you know about an architect?"

"I know what Keefe tells me," said Stine proudly.

"They meet every evening and talk in the street," said Mrs. Milsom. She had stood up and stretched her weary body, throwing her arms up over her head and dropping them again, letting them hang by her poor, lank sides.

"Oh, Lord!" she said, and hid her face in her hands and then looked up and round the miserable room. "It's an idle evening and a bit of supper. Here's Keefe."

The boy came in with a big parcel in one arm and a jug of milk in the other hand. He dumped the parcel down before Mrs. Milsom.

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“I got what I thought you would like—bacon, butter, bread, tea, sugar, eggs, and the dairyman lent me the jug till to-morrow.”

“Oh, Lord!” said the woman again, as she opened the parcel and took out the generous quantities. “It’s many a day since I saw such a lot of food. Here, Stine, light up a bit of fire. No, there’s no coal. Where’s Mattie? That girl——”

“I’m here, Mother,” said a girl about two years older than Stine, with a distinctly different countenance and complexion, and much more untidy.

“And the boys?”

Two small lads came forward and looked at the provisions on the table with hungry eyes.

A man now appeared carrying in a sack of coals and a bundle of sticks.

“Oh, Lord!” moaned the woman once again. The cry seemed her only way of expressing the intensity of her feelings. “Oh, Lord, there’s everything!” she repeated.

Stine was on her knees at the grate and a blaze sprang up in the room from which the light of the sky was fading. Mattie, the other girl, found a broken gridiron, while Stine filled a kettle and put it on the fire.

Mrs. Milsom sliced the bacon and put it ready on the gridiron.

“Oh, sir,” she said, suddenly turning tearful eyes on the stranger, “will you eat a bit with us?”

“Not to-night, thank you, Mrs. Milsom. I must go now; but if you will allow me I will come back to-morrow.”

“Heaven bless you, sir!” said the poor woman,

“Keefe will come with me now and show me a bit of the way,” said the stranger.

Keefe was willing, and the man and boy went down the crazy stairs together.

“Tell me what you know about this family,” said the stranger, as they walked down the street. “Is all true that this poor woman tells me?”

“All true, sir. Poor Joss Milsom was a kind man to her till he became paralysed.”

“She says his head is queer. Has he lost his mind?”

“No, sir. Only he hardly speaks, and sometimes he says things that nobody can understand.”

“For instance?”

“He talks about a secret he has, and nonsense like that.”

“Does she go to see him?”

“She hasn’t time. She sends me. I don’t tell her things about him that would worry her.”

“Is there anything one could do for him?”

“No, he’s very comfortable and well cared for. But anyone would pity her.”

“What about the little girl—Stine?”

“She’s a little angel, sir. She’s all the friend I have. There’s no telling what she does for everybody round her.”

“Good heart, eh?”

“I believe you, sir.”

“And not a bad head either, as it seems to me.”

“She has the brains of them all.”

“And to spare for somebody else. What is that she was saying about a friend who wanted to be an architect?”

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“Did she tell you that?” said Keefe, colouring.

“It is an odd friendship for a youth like you,” said the stranger. “You are of quite a superior class to the Milsoms.”

“Stine is not a Milsom. I don’t know who her people were.”

“She told me she was nobody’s daughter,” said the stranger. “Her people were drowned when Milsom saved her from the wreck?”

“So Joss said. All the passengers went down. He didn’t know who the baby belonged to.”

“Curious to think of it!” mused the stranger. “Joss saved the baby, and the baby lived to grow big enough to save me. For as sure as sunrise I was rushing to my death when the clutch of those small hands pulled me back. What was I thinking of? Dreaming of nothing at all, and humming an aria in Faust? What close neighbours are life and death. It is inconceivable.”

“It’s been a good thing for Mrs. Milsom,” said Keefe.

“I hope so. And now, my boy, I can find the rest of my way out of this maze of streets alone. I shall see you again. Good night!”

“I wonder if he will ever come back,” said Keefe, looking after him till he disappeared behind a lamp-post and the man who was lighting the lamp; for the summer darkness now veiled the unlovely streets, and a few pitiful stars were peering downward, as if trembling for and shrinking from what they might happen to see.

CHAPTER III

For a Song

THE man whom Stine had saved had an engagement for a gay supper that evening, which, however, he failed to fulfil. As he went westward many clocks reminded him of the hour, but he was not in haste to quicken his steps or to hire a vehicle. He walked at a moderate pace, smoking a cigar and thinking deeply of many things past and present, as a man does who is on the eve of one of the crises of life, or who has just passed one by.

He still felt the startling pluck of those young hands that had dragged him out of the jaws of death. How would it have been with him now if the small creature with the big, dark eyes had not been rescued out of an icy sea, picked up to stand at a crossing on this particular evening waiting to rescue him from a horror which he had enough imagination to realize vividly?

In what region of the invisible world would his spirit have now been wandering? What difference would it have made to the visible world in which he lived and moved had he suddenly been blotted out of it?

He was a famous man, but another would soon have come to the front and worn his laurels and filled his place. He was a lonely man, and no one would

have had to mourn him with the mourning hearts of a widow and children. Had it happened long ago there would have been one anguished soul left behind and one infant child to grow up regretting that it had never known a father. But long ago was very long ago, though the man had just arrived at middle age.

Fame, wealth, and the material enjoyments that wealth provides, hosts of acquaintances if not many friends, had covered over and seemingly filled the void in his heart, and it was long since he had been brought face to face with the fact of his solitariness in the world as he found himself to-night.

The face of his young dead wife was before him. Would his infant child have looked at him with the glowing eyes of the girl who had given him a present of his future of days and years? She would have been grown up now had she lived, and Stine was only a little girl twelve years old.

But Stine would grow up too in time, and she had a tender heart and fine brains (said Keefe, who called her an angel), and she was nobody's daughter.

He was a man who liked to have his own way, and it seemed to him hard and perverse in the order of things that his own child should have had to go away from him into the spirit world, while this creature, worthy of a father's care, should have lived through extreme peril to subsist on the crust of charity, and to be one too many in the garret of the hungry and the miserable. And (again the thought would swing back to smite him) why should she have lived to save him, a lonely stranger, who had no one to rejoice at his salvation or to grieve for him had he died?

So strenuous was his struggle with memories that the long walk to his hotel seemed short, and his musings and speculations on past and future continued as he lay on his bed, hardly hearing the grind and shriek of the motors bearing home gay society from the theatre and the ballroom.

A light sleep at last brought him dreams, and one dream was so vivid and so pleasing that out of it he lay smiling and recalling it, feeling still wrapt in an atmosphere which was perfectly new to him, although the dream declared it to be familiar.

In the dream he had been walking in an enchanting garden in a beautiful southern country well known to his early days. He was bathed in sunshine and breathing the scent of orange trees. A magnificent tower, lifting in the blue of the sky, was before his eyes, flowers were at his feet, and he himself was young. A nightingale was singing, but sweeter than the song of the bird was the laughter of one who was walking by his side. He thought she was the daughter he had been thinking of when sleep surprised him, the infant grown up to girlhood, with the form and the voice of her mother, and clothed in the white robe that the long-dead wife of his youth had loved to wear. So she seemed to be wife and daughter in one; and (so strange are the contentments of dreams) he was quite satisfied that it should be so. A single perfect creature making both was enough for his happiness, and slumbering reason felt no wonder at the miracle. Neither did he feel any astonishment when, looking in the upturned face beside him, he saw the face of Stine.

He thought long over the dream, making an effort

of the senses to recall the perfume and sunshine, the airy tracery of a minaret in blue air, the sound of rippling talk and laughter breaking on the music of the nightingale's song, the image of a willowy figure in white flitting through flowers. He closed his eyes and ears to sights and sounds of the reality of morning in Piccadilly, striving to pursue the phantom of happiness into regions of the unknowable; but after it had broken up and vanished like clouds at evening there remained to him nothing of his fiction of slumber but the little face of Stine.

That little face was now more distinctly before his mind's vision than when he had seen it with his eyes on the evening before. The dark eyes with their expression of ardour and ready enthusiasm, the soft mouth with its pathetic curves that disappeared when determination straightened the lips, the thin cheek and rounded brow, all appeared in their reality that had nothing to do with dreams, but were too well acquainted with the sadly actual. He saw again the two little brown hands that had dragged him from death busy poking sticks and bits of coal into a grate to make a fire, filling a rickety kettle with water from a broken pitcher to brew tea. What had this waif in a cold world, this unwanted thing in an overcrowded garret, to do with his memories of lost years, that she should have pierced her way into his dream, making a trinity of the beloved for his momentary happiness?

He had not thought of marking a street or chalking a door like the man in the Forty Thieves, and but for the help of a policeman he might never have found his way back to Mrs. Milsom's tenement. He

had intended to be there early in the day, while the children were all at school, but they were on the door-steps watching for him when he arrived, all except Stine, who had hastened at once to the assistance of the mother.

Mattie, untidy and discontented-looking, led the way, and the two little boys seized him by the hands and pulled him forward. It was a welcome that did not delight him, for these miserable children were a part of the whole situation that made no appeal to him. His business was altogether with the over-worked woman and her fierce daily fight against encroaching starvation.

This time she dropped her work on seeing him, and Stine flew to get him a chair, on which he tried to balance himself for courtesy, though he should have found it easier to stand while he talked.

The woman stood up, out of respect for the friendly visitor whom she had hardly expected to return.

“Won’t you sit down, Mrs. Milsom?” said the visitor.

“Oh, sir, I’m tired always sitting!” said the poor woman. “It’s a treat to me to stand.” Yet she looked ready to fall, so frail and gaunt was she. Stine drew near and put her arm round her, as if to prop her up. The little girl’s eyes were fixed on the stranger with a shy, glad look that had something in it of a sense of proprietorship. They seemed to say that this was her gentleman, and that she had brought him here to be good to them all. The three other children stood round and stared.

The visitor made an effort to talk a little about the family and the work in a general way before he

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touched on the subject of real interest, but at last he got at it.

“You see, Mrs. Milsom, I want to do something for Stine.”

“Do you, sir?” said the woman in a tone that suggested: “What do you mean to do?”

“I think you have too many children here to support on your work.”

“I can’t, sir. It’s worse and worse every day, it is. They don’t get food, and I can’t put clothes on them.”

“Would you give one of them to a person who wanted a child? Not your own children, but Stine? Someone who would take good care of her? What would you give her for?”

“She’s a good girl and helpfuller to me some ways than my own. But if it’s for her bitterness—why, I’d give her to you for a song!”

The man smiled, and then laughed a little and stood up.

“Well, then, you shall have the song,” he said.

He moved over to the fireplace and put his hand on the meagre shelf above it and began to sing.

What a song it was! It began low and clear like a silver bell, and then it rose and grew louder till it filled the poor room with such music as is seldom heard by the ears now listening to it. Soon it filled the house. People came out on the landing above, startled from their work, to listen and to wonder. People below did the same. Others on the stairs stopped and looked up. Down in the street a little crowd gathered. Two men of a better class, superiors in neighbouring works, paused with heads erect, and first one and then the other raised a cry.

“Fandango! Fandango!”

The crowd caught the word, and it was echoed by many who did or did not know what it meant. When the song ceased, the two men who had raised the cry passed on, and one bared his head, saying:

“If that is not Fandango singing I'll eat my hat!”

“I bet you a sov. it's some beggar of a cobbler up yonder imitating him.”

“Done! I'll go and see.”

The next minute the last speaker entered the Milsom garret, hat in hand, bowing low to the singer.

“Mr. Fandango,” he said, “allow me to thank you for your song.”

“Having done so, sir, be good enough to go and mind your own business.”

The intruder was quickly in the street again.

“I've won my bet,” he said to the man waiting for him. “It's Fandango himself, sure enough; good nature, impudence, and all!”

“Now you have my name, besides your song,” said Mrs. Milsom's visitor, smiling as he came to her workbench again and sat down.

“Oh, sir, I didn't mean it! But it's what they say 'for a song'. But you do sing beautiful, sir. And I've seen your name on the big bills in the streets when I'm taking home the work.”

“Well, is it a bargain, ma'am? I've given you your song, and you will give me this little girl for my own. I'm a lonely man, Mrs. Milsom, and I will treat her like a daughter. Many well-known persons will give me a character——”

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“Oh, sir! Stine!”

The girl was clinging to her, gazing at the man with a look of terror.

“I won’t go,” she said, shuddering.

Mrs. Milsom was crying. “There isn’t enough for us all to eat,” she said. “You’ll have to go, Stine, for the sake of everybody.”

“I’ll grow big and work for you,” pleaded Stine.

“There’s no work,” said the woman. “I can’t hold out long, and what is there but the workhouse? I’d give my own children to anyone that would do by them kind. And you are the one that has got the chance, Stine. You’ll have to go, my little girl, with the good gentleman that promises to make a lady of you.”

“She shan’t be sorry for it,” said Fandango, “and neither shall you. Here is a sum of money that will enable you to live in better lodgings and look for a better class of work.”

Mrs. Milsom gasped as she looked at the cheque which he took from his pocket-book and put in her hands.

“Keefe will get you the money and look after it for you,” said Fandango.

Stine uttered a wailing cry: “Keefe! Keefe!”

“That’ll be harder on her than any of it,” Mrs. Milsom said pitifully; but her eyes were on the cheque, and there was a natural joy for herself and her children in her heart.

At this moment Keefe came into the room. Stine had drawn herself away from Mrs. Milsom, and was standing aloof between her and the strange man who wanted to take her away from all the friends she

knew, her hands clasped and her eyes streaming.
When Keefe appeared she ran to him crying:

“Keefe, Keefe! Mammy has sold me to this man,
and I am having to go with him.”

Keefe put his arm round her and his face turned
white.

CHAPTER IV

The Parting of the Ways

THERE was a moment of silent consternation all round. Then Keefe stammered:

“Oh, Mrs. Milsom, you couldn’t!”

“Not sell her, Keefe. But give her to the gentleman, to take her for his own and do han’some for her.”

“She doesn’t want to go.”

“She’ll want well enough by and by when she gets everything she likes, and us starving,” said the poor woman tearfully. “And it isn’t good of you, Keefe, to grudge it to—her.”

“I don’t grudge,” said Keefe in a choking voice.

“But she’s my only friend——”

“Can you take her and do for her?”

“I can’t; I wish I could.”

“We can all wish,” said Mrs. Milsom. “But this good gentleman can make a lady of her.”

“Cheer up, my lad,” said Fandango. “I’m not going to cut her off from her friends. I swear to you that I will give her a father’s care. I will take her with me now, and you can come to see her tomorrow at my hotel.”

Stine looked up and fixed her eyes piteously on the stranger, but she still clung to Keefe, who was holding her hands.

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“And if you don’t go at once, Stine, I’ll say you are a cruel and ungrateful girl to stay here and kill me with working for so many!” burst forth poor Mrs. Milsom, who began to be afraid that the gentleman would repent of his offer, seeing there was so much trouble about accepting it.

Stine gave a wailing cry and hid her face in Keefe’s sleeve for a long minute, and then she whispered to him:

“I’ll have to go, Keefe. I couldn’t kill her. You’ll come and see me, won’t you?”

Keefe still held her tightly, and he choked over an attempt to speak. At last he said:

“I see you’ll have to get her, sir. But may God deal with you as you deal with her! And I’ll hold you to your promise not to cut her off from us.”

“All right, Keefe! You’re a sensible boy. And I’m not a monster. Come with us now. Stine is coming with me, and you’ll see us a part of the way.”

“Oh, sir, you’ll have to take her as she is!” said Mrs. Milsom. “I haven’t any decent clothes to send with her——”

“We’ll get some clothes,” said Fandango, smiling; but he was beginning to feel aware that he had done an impulsive thing, and that a good deal of trouble might come of it. He was not a man to think very seriously on all the bearings of the case before taking a step. For many years he had led a selfish and prosperous life, and everything he liked to have had come to him easily. He had felt during the last twenty-four hours that he wanted this child for a daughter. He had not waited to find out whether

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or not he should always want her. It was time now to put an end to this scene and realize his new position as captor of a weeping young creature who might or might not be happy in his custody.

“You’ll bid me goodbye, Stine, before you go,” said Mrs. Milsom, as the girl silently set her face towards the door.

She turned back and in a dazed way went round the family, hugging and kissing them all, then without another word followed her new guardian.

“Come, Keefe!” said Fandango; and the three went down the stairs together. Long years afterwards both the young creatures remembered the anguish of that cruel descent from the old days they had known together into the new days that were to part them, their hearts weighted by ignorance of what the separation would bring to them in the future.

Little was said among the three as they threaded several streets. It was still only four o’clock in the afternoon, and Fandango, unconventional as he was, had begun to think of the next steps to be taken in order to introduce his new daughter to his hotel with a certain propriety, avoiding criticism, still less inviting ridicule.

“Now, Keefe,” he said at last, “I am going to take a cab, and you had better go home. You can come to see Stine to-morrow at the hotel.”

Keefe felt himself dismissed while he called a cab, and Fandango went into a telephone station and sent a message. Stine was put into the cab beside the gentleman, and Keefe stood to see them drive away. When they were out of sight he wheeled round and walked on, scarcely seeing where he was going.

"Oh, Stine, Stine!" he sobbed.

"Look at that big fella blubbin'!" shouted an impish voice beside him, and he saw that the little street boys were jeering him. He brushed away the tears from his face, looked about to see where his feet had carried him, and turned round again to take the longest way to reach the dwelling he called his home.

Meanwhile Fandango had bidden the cabman to drive him in a westerly direction, and to stop at the first draper's establishment he saw on his way. This being done, Stine followed her new guardian into the shop and was handed over to a lady superintendent.

"I want to have this child dressed nicely in a lady-like manner," said Fandango, "and I want you to put up a little kit for her with some of the things that a girl requires."

The shopkeeper smiled and wondered, but was not slow in taking advantage of so good an order. Stine was led to a private apartment and clothed as desired, and a neat case was packed with a pretty selection of such garments for day and night as a nicely-cared-for girl has need of. When she returned to the part of the shop where Fandango was waiting for her he laughed at the extraordinary transformation.

"Look in the glass, little girl," he said, placing her before a mirror in which she could see herself from head to foot.

"Who is it?" she said, looking at the image with a kind of terror. She had seen herself many a time in shop windows, and she knew how she ought to appear. But this was a girl who seemed much taller

and older, a young lady in a frock of soft green velvety material and a crimson hat, very becoming to her dark, *spirituelle* eyes, dusky hair, and pallid skin. The frock was not as she had known frocks, up to her knees, but was down to her ankles, and she had bright buckles on her shoes, and gloves on her hands.

"Oh no, it—is not me," she said, looking round to discover if anyone was near whose reflection she might have seen.

"Hold up your hand," said Fandango, laughing, and she held it up, and let it fall.

"Oh," she said, "what have they done to me?"

"You see what a change clothes can make!" said Fandango.

"They will never know me when they see me," urged Stine, with a grieved lip.

"Well, my dear, if they don't they needn't. You never belonged to them. They can't say now that you are nobody's daughter. You are my child, and of course I have dressed you in character."

These words only added to the bewilderment of Stine, who turned away from the mirror to avoid a second look at the strange figure that had come between her and her old self and the friends who had loved her. She felt warned away into some strange place where her loved ones could never follow her.

What would Keefe say to her?—Keefe in his dusty jacket and his thick shoes! How could she walk into Mrs. Milsom's garret looking like that? Could she ever sweep the floor, or light the fire, or make poor Mammy a cup of tea, or cut the bread for the children, in a frock and shoes like these? And, oh, who would

do it now she was gone? Mattie would rather be downstairs standing at the door or playing in the street, and poor Mammy Milsom never had any time—

Such thoughts rushed through Stine's mind, and heavy tears began to come down her cheeks.

"Don't you like the dress?" asked Fandango, disappointed. "Isn't it pretty enough?"

"Oh, sir, it's too pretty! But you don't know how they'll miss me. I'm too grand now to be any good to anybody."

"Oh, that's what's the matter, is it?" said Fandango. "I think you will be very good for me, little girl."

Stine did not say: "I don't care about being good to a stranger when I can't do anything for those I love;" but that was the thought in her heart.

"So come along!" said Fandango.

Another cab had been called, and the young lady's neat trunk had been placed on it. A porter brought out a small parcel, which contained the few poor garments left off by Stine, and placed it in the cab while Fandango reflected on the best means of disposing of it. When they had driven another mile, Fandango hid the parcel under the cushions of the cab, pulled up the driver, paid him off, transferred Stine, himself, and the trunk into another vehicle, and proceeded on the way to his hotel.

"Now," he said, laughing at Stine and rubbing his hands with glee, "I think we have pretty well wiped out the traces of our guilt!"

Stine was feeling more and more sure that she had been carried off by a very odd person, who might

drive away with her into some awful wilderness, or drop her in the street and leave her there. How was she ever to find her way back to the Milsoms' garret, or to the crossing where she used to meet Keefe, back through all the streets they had travelled in cabs, across a whole city, or, as it seemed to Stine, across the entire world?

At last they arrived at the hotel, or a great palace, probably the king's house, and Stine was presently in the hall, with servants attending on her and taking directions from her guardian.

"I hope you have the young lady's room ready," he said. "You got my message?"

"Yes, sir. Quite ready. Mrs. Plumtree will show you the apartment."

The prosperous-looking manageress, dressed in prune silk, was at the head of the stairs to receive them.

"My niece is tired with her journey," said Fandango. "Yes, this is a pretty room; overlooking the Park, I see. Bring her some tea, please, and let her have a rest before dinner. You can send someone to dress her, I suppose? We shall dine at table-d'hôte."

"A maid shall attend, sir," said the lady. It was evident that Fandango was a favourite in the hotel.

"And, Mrs. Plumtree, by the way, would you like a couple of tickets for the Opera next week?"

"Oh, Señor Fandango! How kind of you, sir! I have so longed to hear you sing! People say that nothing like it was ever heard in London."

"People say a lot of things," said Fandango, with a laugh. "Now, Stine, my dear, enjoy your tea

and have some rest, and I will come back to take you down to dinner."

Then Stine was left for a while alone in a room which was to her more beautiful than any place she could have dreamed of. She looked with awe on the pretty curtained bed, the shining furniture, and the white toilet coverings. There stood her trunk waiting to be unpacked. She wondered what would come out of it. She took off her stylish hat and cast a shrinking glance at the figure reflected in the mirror.

Then a maid came in, asking if she would like a bath after the fatigue of her long journey. Stine thought she would. Returning from the bathroom, she found her trunk unpacked and a pretty dressing-gown put ready to wear while she was taking her tea.

"Dear, dear, miss, you do look tired," said the maid, pouring out tea that was served in a way never seen before by Stine. "And, to be sure, Paris is a long way off, and a rough crossing, besides the railway journey."

Stine burst into tears.

"You'll be better when you drink this, and then lie down and take a sleep," said the maid kindly. "Your uncle told us you were near heartbroken at having to leave your school. It isn't every young lady that is so fond of her school, and not every young lady has such a great, kind uncle to come back to."

"Oh, I can't talk! I am tired. Thank you, thank you!" said Stine; and she was helped up on what seemed to her an enormous bed, with pillars of gold (or brass), and very soon she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER V

The Transformation

SEÑOR FANDANGO was at this time of his life one of the most famous men in Europe, the great tenor whom all who could manage it flocked to the opera to hear, whose portrait was in the shop windows, and whose voice was to be heard on every gramophone—from the huge instrument of the popular entertainment to the more modest wonder-horn of the children's school treat.

During the week of the events with which this story opens he was taking some days of rest, enjoying his evenings as at his own disposal, dining out among his friends and admirers in London, creating a good deal of interest by his comings and goings at the hotel, and seldom appearing as one of the company at table d'hôte. When on the evening of his capture of Stine he sat at the table beside a charming young figure in a white lace frock and blue ribbons, many eyes were turned on him with curiosity. The news that he had been joined by a pretty young niece, on holiday from her Paris school, had reached a few travelled ladies sojourning at the hotel, one or two of whom had already made Fandango's acquaintance.

The great tenor was accustomed to overwhelming

compliments on his own magical powers, but it was amusingly strange to him to receive congratulations on this his new acquisition, as though it had been a mere family responsibility, natural and ordinary in a world full of girl children.

“She is really wonderfully like you, Señor,” said a sprightly American widow, who prided herself on having met Fandango before in a hotel in New York. “Racial traits will assert themselves, and Spanish eyes——”

“Pardon me,” said the singer, “my niece is not a Fandango, nor Spanish. My mother was an English-woman, and my sister and I were born in England.”

The lady was puzzled and her curiosity baffled for the moment, and while she reflected on the scanty amount of information given, Fandango was trying to invent a surname for Stine, the girl who was “nobody’s daughter”.

His eyes went from the child’s face, now flushed and sparkling with excitement, to a branch of roses with thorned stems standing in a crystal vase on the table, and with characteristic, whimsical impulsiveness he settled the question of a name for Stine without further consideration.

“Her name is Rosethorne,” he said carelessly. “Christina Rosethorne—a happy name, as both she and I are exceedingly fond of roses.”

“But not of thorns,” protested the lady.

“We can hardly expect one without the other,” said Fandango lightly; and he took a half-blown rose from the crystal and stuck it into the lace on Stine’s shoulder.

Stine was listening with amazement to all that he

was saying. At school she had been taught that lying to deceive was wickedness, and yet here was this man, who was so good and generous to her, and so respected by all these people, uttering falsehoods, every one of which was putting her farther away into a new, strange world, where the friends she loved would never be able to find her. She sat silent among them all, unable to think of anything she could say, or to find a voice to say it, if anything had occurred to her as a thing to be said. Fandango, watching her, seemed highly amused at her astonishment; but, being a man of the world, however kindly, it never crossed his mind that he was lowering himself in the estimation of this young waif picked up in an east-end tenement.

In the hotel drawing-room Stine was surrounded with ladies, all willing to take notice of her—from benevolent or interested motives. She was asked a host of questions which she was too much frightened to attempt to answer. In order to frame replies she would have needed as much ready invention and disregard of truth as Fandango himself. So silent was she that she was voted stupid, or impossibly shy, and one by one the well-meaning dames gave her up. A French lady said: “She has been so long in Paris that she has perhaps forgotten her English”, and began to question her in French. There was no response except a frightened glance, and the baffled questioner retired, saying:

“She is sullen and *farouche*! It is better to leave her to herself.”

So Stine was left sitting bolt upright on a sofa all alone, suffering from a sense of desolation inconceiv-

able to those around her, and wondering when this trial of utter loneliness would come to an end. Where was Señor Fandango? Had he placed her here for a freak, and would he never return to have further care for her? Many people had come to Mrs. Milsom's tenement promising helpfulness, and had never appeared there again. These dreadful thoughts passing through her mind gave an expression of so much anguish to the young face that a quite elderly lady, sitting somewhat apart engaged in knitting some elegant trifle of silk and wool, noticed it, and felt compassion for her.

Stine felt steady, sympathetic eyes fixed on her, and glanced across the room to meet them. A white hand, a little wrinkled, was raised; some fine old rings gleamed as a finger beckoned to her. For a few moments she was uncertain, but seeing the signal repeated she got up, crossed the floor, and stood before the person who had summoned her.

“Sit down here beside me, my dear, and hold this skein of silk for an old woman.”

Stine obeyed instantly, and smiled as the skein of silk was stretched on her little brown hands, while the lady proceeded quickly to wind the silk into a ball for the purpose of her knitting.

“She knows English at all events,” said the knitter to herself. “And she is neither stupid nor *farouche*.”

Stine was watching with fascination the movements of the white, wrinkled, jewelled hand that was winding the silk, thinking that here was a kind of “old woman” she had never seen or imagined—a mild, handsome person, with a scarf of rich lace thrown

over her snow-white hair, and a jewel flashing from some more such lace on her shoulders. About her there was an atmosphere of reserve and refinement that distinguished her from most of the other women in the room, and Stine, though ignorant and inexperienced in the ways of ladies, instinctively felt it, as she would have perceived the fragrance of violets in a room full of tulips.

A few simple remarks about the intricacies of knitting engaged Stine's attention. She had learned to knit at school, and admitted as much.

"But I only learned stockings," she said, "and I never was good at doing the heel."

The old lady smiled. Two things surprised her. One was the practical spirit of the Parisian school; the other was the little girl's peculiar London accent.

"If you like to learn this kind of stitch I will teach you," she said.

Stine honestly confessed that she was not very fond of knitting. Then somehow a question concerning the various kinds of needlework taught at a ladies' school obliged her to say:

"I never was at that kind of school."

The lady now had the impression that "school" had meant some kind of private tuition, and changed the subject of remarks to that of the marbles in the Gallery of the Louvre.

"I do not know. I never was in Paris," said Stine.

"My dear, I understood your uncle to say——"

"I have no uncle," said Stine hastily.

The old lady stopped winding her ball of silk and looked mildly over her spectacles. The three unex-

pected statements from the girl took her by surprise. In the child's face she read anxiety, trouble, and the truth. After a few minutes' reflection, she said to herself:

"There is something wrong here. But it is no affair of mine. I have a great dislike to knowing other people's secrets."

"I find I have misunderstood," she then said aloud. "See, I have wound up all the silk. You are not tired, I hope, of holding your hands so steadily?"

"Oh no!" said Stine. At the same moment Fandango and other men came into the room, and Stine felt suddenly stricken by the fact that she had just given him the lie three times over, an unkind return for his generosity. His eyes searched the large room, and fell on her with an encouraging glance from which she shrank guiltily.

"It is very kind of you, Mrs. Petworth, to take notice of my little girl," he said.

"She has been very useful to me," replied the lady. "We have wound several skeins of silk into a ball."

Though there was nothing of condescension in her manner, one might have perceived a something, very slight, suggesting that she was aware of a difference between her own class and breeding and those of the famous singer. Stine had held her breath, expecting to hear her strange guardian reproached for his deceit. Her experience had not taught her the wise reserve of tact or the forbearance of a charitable spirit. She sat silently between these two strangers who had so suddenly come into her life, feeling in her quick-witted way that though they might be one in kind

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intention towards herself, they were far apart in almost everything that constitutes individual character.

Mrs. Petworth then began to speak of music, asking Fandango the authorship of a song she had heard him sing, and Stine felt with relief that nothing more was to be said about herself for the present. Soon afterwards the lady rose, saying it was quite time for old women and children to be in bed, and with a kind "Good night, my dear", to Stine, and a bow to Fandango, she departed.

In her bedroom Stine found the good-natured maid waiting for her, arranging her pretty things for the night, and surprised to see the young lady still ready to weep at every kind word spoken to her.

"Of course Paris is a splendid place," said the girl, while she brushed her hair; "but you wait till you see what London is properly! It isn't driving through the streets from the railway, and you dead tired and sick crossing—I'm sure you were, my dear; but it's going in motors to theatres and all kinds of shows, and walking in the park, and seeing Mr. Fandango's friends that will want to be nice to you."

Stine slept soundly for an hour or two, but wakened in a state of terror, not knowing at first where she was, or what had happened to her. When all was remembered she lay staring at the dawn-light creeping round the edges of the blinds, and wondering whether Mammy Milsom had got up off her share of the hard mattress in the corner of the garret, and if anyone was lighting a fire for her and making her a cup of tea. Now that she—Stine—was gone, would Mattie do it? The boys were too small, and Mattie would



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"STINE WAS WATCHING WITH FASCINATION THE MOVEMENTS OF
THE JEWELLED HANDS WINDING THE SILK"

never be up in time. And Mammy had no time to spare, and her fingers were stiff with working.

Stine remembered with some ease of heart that there was coal in the box, and food on the shelf for breakfast. And Mrs. Milsom had money now to go to live in a better lodging. Where would she go? and would Keefe come and tell her all about it? Would Mr. Fandango really allow him to come to see her; and would Keefe be able to talk to her among all these grand people?

Fandango was one of the last to go to rest in the hotel that night. He walked up and down the pavement before the door, smoking and reflecting, in his own dreamy fashion, on the surprising event of the past day. He was no longer a lonely man. He had got a daughter. His conscience did not reproach him at all with the fictions which had startled Stine, and he did not imagine that her shyness and silence could have allowed her so soon to contradict those statements. He was accustomed to act impulsively, and afterwards see his way through the consequences as best he might.

He was aware that his conscience had not always been a very strict one, but he was also sure that his general intentions were good. He had once, long ago, behaved badly to a friend, but it was more from procrastination and thoughtless neglect than from dishonesty or ingratitude. That was all gone by, and irreparable. He would make amends now, if it were possible, and perhaps a fatherly protection of this girl waif, who had preserved to him the life he was not ready to relinquish, might go in some way towards atoning for past wrongdoing.

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On these thoughts he rested for the moment, and finishing his cigar he deferred all consideration of the future to daylight hours, and went to bed fully satisfied that he had done a good action in the day that was ending with the midnight strokes of Big Ben, and that poetical justice was waiting to reward him with the slumber of the just.

CHAPTER VI

Keefe at Home

KEEFE's real uncle was not as generous in his dealings with the boy who had been thrown on his charity as was Stine's mock uncle to the girl he had undertaken to provide for. Sam Stonewall was the step-brother of Keefe's mother, who had been better born on one side than he, a fact which he had resented, and of which he thought she and others had been too cognizant. She had married into a better class, and there had been little intercourse between them up to the time of her death, which had followed quickly on the death of her husband.

Stonewall was a builder by trade, and as he had no child of his own it proved after all that the boy was very useful to him, and promised to be more so to him when grown to manhood and able to carry on his uncle's business. Late in life, having been long a widower, Sam had married a young woman who had been his servant, and whose good nature made Keefe's life more endurable than it might have been.

The builder's house stood back a little from a long straggling street, with a small mean office in front, and a great yard behind full of rubbish and building materials. The house was poorly furnished and comfortless, except for the large kitchen sitting-room look-

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ing out on the yard, into which Sib Stonewall had gathered all the odds and ends of things pleasant and home-like upon which she could manage to lay her toil-hardened hands. Strips of red moreen as curtains on the windows, bright tins on the walls, some brilliant oleographs from Christmas numbers of pictorial papers, framed by the carpenter on the premises, a huge sofa covered with a crimson blanket—these features gave the apartment a certain aspect of cheerfulness, especially when Sib was in it, and more particularly when Uncle Sam was out of it.

Keefe's little den upstairs was also as habitable as it lay within Aunt Sib's power to make it. She took care that he had enough blankets on his bed, and a curtain, however dingy in hue, to keep out the draught from a loose-hung window which the builder's energies had never taxed themselves to put to rights. His box of books was hidden away under the bed, with a candle for stolen night studies, for to see the boy with a book in his hand was to Sam Stonewall like the proverbial red rag to a bull.

“The fellow got his schoolin' like other boys,” he said, “and now he has other fish to fry. Was it readin' books with long words that set me up and gave me a business of my own, with men under me, and money in the bank? You've a head on your shoulders, Sib, and you know what I mean. If the boy works as I did he'll have the business to himself some day when I'm in kingdom come. But if he sits up readin' books and drawerin' pictures and maps of great buildin's for other men to build and make money out of, and countin' on gettin' my money without helpin' me to earn any—well, I'm hanged if

I don't kick him into the street, and let him go forage for himself wherever he pleases!"

Sib was a politic woman, and had a way of shaking her head that seemed to agree with everything her husband said, and yet committed her to nothing. When Sam complimented her on having "a head on her shoulders" she was rewarded for her unfailing tact; and when he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and went out to his workmen's club, she had no scruple about calling Keefe in out of the shed in the yard, where he was making up accounts for the day, and giving him a bowl of his uncle's soup, which she had saved for him at the bottom of the saucepan.

She also knew something about the ways and means by which Keefe managed to get his books. Though an almost unlettered woman herself, she had a profound respect for learning, and sympathized keenly with what she considered the boy's scholarly longings. She felt instinctively the difference of nature between her rough-hewn husband and the youth whom he held in servitude, and did her best to prevent the destruction of the china pot by the brass pot as they went together down the stream. That Keefe had ambition and talents to work it out she quite believed. While to his fellow workers he was simply a big soft boy, patient and plodding, and long-suffering under a yoke of which they, as hired labourers, were independent, to Sib he was a creature of a mysterious hidden power, of the existence of which no one was aware but herself. In her shrewd way she was conscious that to betray this faith of hers to Sam Stonewall would be damaging both to herself

and to the boy. So she shook her head when her husband grumbled about him, and secretly helped Keefe to buy the books which he stored in the box with the candle, and which she kept carefully hidden away for him under his bed.

As Keefe was learning his trade from his uncle without a fee paid, and was receiving food and lodging, no wages were granted to him, but only a small weekly sum, supposed to be pocket money. A suit of clothes at long intervals was allowed as necessary, but Keefe was not permitted to choose them himself, and the money to pay for them never passed through his hands. The few shillings for his pocket were saved for purchases from the second-hand bookseller, with the addition of an occasional contribution from Sib, who had a thrifty housewife's cleverness in pinching a little to save off the housekeeping money.

Another secret, well kept for Keefe from his uncle, was his friendship with Stine and the Milsoms. Sam Stonewall would have pronounced such associates degrading and dangerous, as he believed that the extreme of poverty was invariably allied to ruffianism.

“Don’t tell me,” he would say, “that people would not be well off if they were saving and industrious. Look at me! What would I ha’ been if I hadn’t got a patch on my elbow when another fellow was buying a new coat, and if I hadn’t put by one copper on top of another till they made a shillin’ among them, instead of spendin’ the odd ha’pence as if they didn’t signify? Here I am now with a business of my own, and men under me!”

“So you are, Sam,” Mrs. Stonewall would cry

admiringly, and not insincerely, for she was clever enough to see her husband's best points as well as his worst, and she had no little pride in the success of the man who had not only made a fine position for himself, but had lifted her into it.

She knew it was his love for Stine and his delight in the little girl's understanding sympathy with his aspirations that had brought Keefe into contact with the Milsom family, and she saw no harm in either one or the other. Many a little offering of food for the children had passed from her hand into Keefe's pocket, and from his pocket to the little hungry boys on their way to school.

"It's my own," she would say, "for I'm sure I earn it hard enough from Sam. Before I married him he had to give me wages, but now I have to crib what I can get."

Yet her pride in the great tradesman, with a business of his own and men under him, who had married her forbade her to admit even to herself that she was not quite generously treated. With all her common sense and shrewd prudence she had the Irish faculty (for she was an Irishwoman) of weaving some threads of the romance of fiction into the rough web of undeniable facts, and to bid her pick them out or leave them out would have been to ask her to quit her loom like the Lady of Shalott and go down the river of the world to death. Seeing her broad homely face and figure, one would never have imagined that such a spirit could abide in the creature, till one looked at her big dark eyes and realized that something invisible in the ordinary light of day might live behind them,

This was the woman to whom Keefe returned on the evening of Stine's departure out of his life—who came across the yard to the office to look for him, to tell him that his uncle was gone to the club, and that she had a bit of supper ready for him.

She found him with his arms thrown forward on the desk, and his face buried in them, in an attitude of utter despair.

"What's the matter now, Keefe?" she asked.
"Has Sam Stonewall been talkin' to you?"

"No," said Keefe, shaking himself up and throwing a loose lock of his fair hair back out of his wet eyes.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Stine's gone," said Keefe, standing up and looking, not at her, but at the blank wall where the last gleam of daylight was fading.

"Gone where?"

"A gentleman has taken her off Mrs. Milsom's hands, to make a lady of her," said Keefe, with a big sob.

"Is he a good man?"

"They say he is," said the boy, making an effort to behave like a man, "and rich, and a great singer. He wants to have Stine for a daughter."

"Well, and won't that be very good for her?" said Sib reproachfully.

"Maybe it will," said Keefe, "but it won't be very good for me."

"How do you know that?" said Sib. "Come in with me now to the house and tell me about it."

Keefe wound up affairs at the desk, locked the office, and followed her across the yard into the

bright light of the kitchen sitting-room, where fire and lamp were burning.

"I declare, but you look like a housebreaker!" said Sib, surveying his forlorn figure. "Here, drink your soup and the shivers will go off o' you, and sit down and talk to me."

Keefe swallowed the soup, and was glad to draw near the fire though it was summer, for the shivers of grief were on him.

"You were always too much set on that little girl," said Sib. "You'll have to get over it. If you're really fond of her, what's good for her ought to be good for you. If she's goin' to be a lady, you're goin' to be a gentleman, I'm thinkin'."

Keefe said nothing. He was seeing tragedy in the red wreck of coals in the heart of the fire.

"You're not forbid to see her?" said Mrs. Stonewall, after she had heard the whole story.

"No," said Keefe. "The man told me I could go to the hotel to-morrow to see her."

"There now! Will that not be as good as meetin' the creature wild at the corner of a street? And I suppose he'll give her plenty to eat, and put decent clothes on her."

"Oh, of course!" said Keefe.

"And you're grumblin' about that?"

"Not about that. The trouble is, that she can never be the friend to me she used to be. Nobody knows anything of all that but myself. She had such a wonderful little head for understanding about everything. And she'd stand at the crossing to watch for me like a sentinel at his post, and run to meet me when she'd see me. She knew all about the hopes

I had in life, and she kept up my heart when I was miserable, and believed I was going to do big things in the world."

"And so you are, Keefe. Don't talk about her as if she was dead."

"I think she's dead to me. That big swell gent spoke kind enough to me, but I saw in his eyes that he meant to take her from me."

"Didn't he say you were to come to see her at the hotel?"

"He did," said Keefe, "but he gave me no address. I was walking along with them, when he suddenly took a cab and drove away with her."

"That was a forget," said Sib. "You will have a letter in the morning to tell you where you are to go. And to-morrow, as soon as you are off work, you must start to see her."

"She was crying," said Keefe. "She didn't want to go. Mrs. Milsom gave her up too quick."

"You couldn't do anything for her," said Sib, "and neither could I. And the poor Milsoms are starving. When you are a great man you can still be her friend. Cheer up now, and say your prayers, and go to bed and sleep on it."

Keefe pretended to be comforted, and went to bed. But he could not sleep, and heard the big clocks all the night through; for he mistrusted the farewell look that he had seen in the unsympathetic eyes of the pleasant man who had suddenly started up out of an unknown somewhere and carried off his little sweetheart.

CHAPTER VII

Second Thoughts

WHEN Fandango wakened next morning, the first thing that came into his mind was the fact that the boy Keefe might be expected to arrive at the hotel in search of Stine any time during the course of the day, and with the expectation came a keen realizing of the probable awkwardness arising from such a visit.

At parting from Keefe he had given him permission to come. But at that moment he had not thought of the turn things would take as soon as the girl had been introduced into the hotel and placed in her present surroundings—so rapidly do acts of impulse produce unforeseen circumstances. Fandango found himself already annoyed with the difficulties in prospect which he had created.

Stine was already an object of interest to the ladies in the hotel, and how could he account for the affectionate intimacy between his young niece from her school in Paris and the big lubberly boy from a workshop in the East End of London? While dressing, Fandango was at the mercy of those second thoughts which are so often the salvation of the thinker, and as many times may be his undoing. He had now to invent a few more fictions, and he chafed at the

necessity. But before he had proceeded very far an idea occurred to him which set his mind at ease. He had intended to give Keefe the address of the hotel, but he had forgotten to do it.

Yesterday it would have seemed cruel to deny this favour to the boy and to vex the girl by cutting her off at once from all her friends, but to-day the case looked altogether different. The boy at his work would suffer for a while, and the girl would fret, but both would soon forget; and as he, Fandango, was now committed to bringing up this child as a daughter of his own, it was more convenient that she should not have a number of indigent persons following her into a future which could have no real touch with them.

They were all there in a bunch, Keefe and the rest of them. With regard to Mrs. Milsom, she had already received a substantial help and had been relieved of encumbrance; and as for the boy, he had no kind of claim on Fandango's daughter.

Having thus arranged affairs with his conscience, and assured himself of the satisfactory state of his intentions, Fandango went to breakfast in the highest spirits.

Stine met him with smiles he had not seen before, for she, too, had thought of Keefe the first thing on awaking, sure that the day would bring him, and cheered with a hope that the man who was so kind to her would be kind to him also—perhaps enter into his difficulties and help him to attain his desires. As he bade her good morning, Fandango was more than ever struck by the beauty and intelligence of the young face raised confidently to his; and while he poured out

her coffee he felt reassured that he must keep this wild rosebud altogether for himself, completely severing her connection with low-class people and lifting her absolutely into prosperity.

"Keefe will come to-day, will he not?" she said.
"You will let me see him, Señor?"

"Call me Uncle," said Fandango. "Your mother was my sister; do you understand?"

"But that is not true," said Stine, looking at him wistfully.

"I am making it true by taking you for my daughter. I shall make you my daughter, but it is easier to call you my niece. Let us say no more about that. You are to call me Uncle."

"You will let me see Keefe, Uncle?" said Stine, yielding the point, and going back to her anxiety about her friend.

"If he comes, yes," said Fandango. "I want to take you out to see several things that will amuse you; but you can see Keefe, of course, if he should happen to turn up."

"Oh," said Stine, "it won't be turning up or happening! He wants so much—he will be sure to come."

"He couldn't come till the evening, could he?" said Fandango. "He must do his day's work first, I fancy. You will have time to come out with me before he could possibly arrive."

"I am not sure. He might get off. It would be dreadful if I were out and did not see him."

"He could come again."

Stine's heart sank. The man before her had evidently no idea of all she was to Keefe and all Keefe was to her. She said no more, but she stood her

ground. Nothing would induce her to go out to be amused, at the risk of missing Keefe. She sat at the window all that day. She watched the people in the street, she listened to every step on the stair and every opening door, but he never came.

When evening passed and bedtime arrived she looked pale and ill. Fandango felt remorseful. But, after all, he had not planned this yesterday. How could he have imagined that so small a creature could feel so much? He had really forgotten to give the boy the address of the hotel. When the second day passed and no Keefe appeared, and Stine was miserable, he would have sent for her friend if in a moment of kindly sympathy he could have telephoned to him to come. But the message was impossible, and the moment of sympathy was, after all, fleeting.

"He doesn't know the place. He can't have got the address," said Stine.

"Then you must write to him," said Fandango, urged by another pang of pity.

Stine grasped at the suggestion, and got a sheet of paper with the address of the hotel at the top, and wrote her letter; but when it was written she remembered that she knew not how to address it so that the postman could find her friend.

"I know the place," she said piteously; "I could find my way there if I was at Mrs. Milsom's or at the Crossing, but I can't remember if I ever heard the name of the street.

"Well, then, we must wait," said Fandango. "He will find this hotel by making enquiries."

The days went on, and Fandango began to get tired of his pity for Stine's distress. Keefe was in

all probability quite lost sight of, and through nobody's fault. If Stine were removed out of London, and could no longer expect the visit of her friend, she would have to give up her hope of seeing him, and be contented with the new life that was before her. At the end of the week his engagements in London would be at an end, and he must leave it for Paris. Things must drift on in the course they had taken without any predetermination of his concerning the separation of these two young people.

As the days passed he became more and more annoyed at Stine's persistence in refusing to leave the hotel. He was alarmed at what he considered the obstinacy of her temper.

Yet the earnest nature and resolute purpose of the little creature, while it crossed his wishes and annoyed him, did not altogether repel him. In contrast to his own easy, volatile temperament it astonished him, and he admitted to himself that if he could win a daughter's love from her as she grew up under his shelter, the devotion of such a nature would be a possession of sterling value.

To this end he thought it highly important that former ties so strong should be severed immediately, and that Stine should be removed from undesirable influences.

In his present perplexity he felt the need of some woman's sympathy and counsel. He perceived that Stine shrank from the notice of the ladies staying in the hotel, with the exception of Mrs. Petworth, who, in an unobtrusive way, seemed to keep a grandmotherly eye upon her.

He acknowledged that the child in this showed an

excellent instinct. The admiration of the travelling ladies on their season holiday in London from different parts of the globe was exceedingly pleasant to the famous singer; but he easily recognized in the white-haired elderly woman—who seldom spoke to him, and then only about the highest order of music—a personality of unusual dignity and refinement.

He reflected a good deal on the matter before he made up his mind to confide in Mrs. Petworth, to a certain limited extent, his anxiety about his niece and his present difficulty with regard to her.

“She is looking ill from keeping to the house in this sultry weather,” he said. “I see that you have an influence over her. I am sure you could persuade her that it is her duty to come out with me when I wish to give her pleasure.”

“The child has some fear or anxiety that keeps her in the house,” said the lady, with a keen glance out of her mild eyes over her spectacles.

“Her mood I consider unreasonable,” he said. “She has an acquaintance in London whom I do not approve of for her. She has been hoping for a visit from him, and he has not come. She fears to leave the hotel lest he should call in her absence.”

“Brave little girl!” said Mrs. Petworth. “You have not forbidden the friendship, have you?”

“Not absolutely, though I am anxious to put an end to it.”

“Upon serious grounds?”

“Sufficiently serious, from my point of view, though perhaps not from hers.”

Mrs. Petworth reflected for half a minute with her fair, wrinkled brow a little puckered.

"The person is not an unworthy character?" she asked.

"No, not at all," Fandango said, as Keefe's devotion to the poor Milsoms and his aspirations as described by Stine came across his memory. "But he is a big boy who will one day be a man, and he is in a class of life quite beneath that to which the child will belong naturally."

Mrs. Petworth suppressed a smile at the slightly pompous tone in which the popular tenor seemed to lay claim to a particularly elevated position in the world. But she was not an unkindly woman, and was unwilling to slight anyone whom she believed to be so well-intentioned as this amiable music-maker, so she said:

"If you care for my opinion, I may say that I think you would do well to trust the child's instinct with regard to a friend whom you yourself do not believe to be unworthy. Such friendships, if unsuitable, die out as the young develop and mature. At least, such is the result of my observation and experience. You will naturally move about the world, and by seeing many people she will learn to estimate values."

"It is exactly what I hope for her," said Fandango.

"And at present, while the heart is so young and tender, I would not hurt it by the rude breaking of a childish attachment."

Fandango's impressionable mind accepted this for the moment as a beautiful view of the case, and he thanked Mrs. Petworth warmly for her sympathetic counsel. But an hour later he was thinking over the best means of hastening his departure from London.

He ceased to worry Stine, however, and allowed

her to sit at the window and to believe that Keefe would come, and that if he did not come some measures would be taken to communicate with him.

"We could go back to Mrs. Milsom's," she said, "and they would show us the way to Keefe's uncle's house."

"You forget, my dear, that Mrs. Milsom has by this time changed her lodgings," said Fandango.

"Oh!" said Stine, in tears; "if she has, then I don't know where to find her. But Keefe would know. And if I could get to that crossing I am sure I should remember the rest of the way."

Fandango said that perhaps she could; but he resolved that she should never go and try.

CHAPTER VIII

“We’re Going to See”

KEEFE got up very early, and to keep himself from thinking he worked hard until the moment when the postman might be expected to appear. But when that much-desired and much-dreaded man did appear it was on the opposite side of the street, passing along as unconcernedly as if no one in all the wide world was either craving something from his bag or in terror of seeing grief or ruin come out of it.

“No letter,” said Keefe.

“There’s a many posts in the day,” said Sib.

But the day passed, and still “No letter, no letter!” was the reiterated cry of Keefe’s impatience. Neither did the next day bring any tidings. The days of the week came in their turn empty-handed and went the way of all days, leaving Keefe like a creature after shipwreck, washed up on a strange shore by waves that had stripped him of everything but life.

“I mean to see her, though,” he said. “This man sings in public, and I will follow him about till I find him.”

So, early in the dawn before work, and in evening when it was over, he was studying the bills on the hoardings that informed the public when and where the great tenor Fandango was to delight the people

who had money enough to indulge in the luxury of hearing him sing.

Keefe was not one of those people. He had no money, and, besides, he knew that to sit in a great hall or an opera house staring at his enemy across a sea of heads, and listening to music and to the praises of a wrongdoer, was not the way to attain his object. His plan was to find the place and the moment when the man would be passing into or out of these public music houses, to lay hold of him, and not to let him go till he should have gained from him the knowledge of where Stine was to be found.

With this determination he tramped much of London, and though over and over again he found the place and the hour, and caught a glimpse of the man, yet he was not able to effect his purpose. He was thrust back by a crowd, or hustled aside by the police, and returned to the builder's yard eating his heart out with disappointment.

"Never mind," said Sib. "Stick to it and your luck will turn. It's only the foot that grows tired that trips, and the heart that sinks that fails."

Keefe's feet were blistered, his eyes were strained for want of sleep, and his face was haggard, when at last Fandango saw him under a street lamp, and felt a grip on his arm.

"Oh, it's you, Keefe!" he said, pausing with his foot on the step of his motor. "Let him alone," he said to the policeman. He was touched by the woe-ful appearance of the boy. "What do you want with me?"

"Oh, sir, you said I might come to see Stine at your hotel, but you forgot to give me the address!"

I want it now. I had no other way of seeing you, sir.”

“Well, my boy, I am sorry you are so anxious about it, for it is now too late. We are off to Paris to-morrow morning.”

“Not without letting me see her, sir, or letting me know where to write to her?” cried Keefe, and the sob in his voice made Fandango feel very uncomfortable. But this passion of persistence and urgency only strengthened his resolution to put an end to so strenuous a claim on the future of the girl he had adopted as a daughter. He had no wish, however, to be more harsh with the poor lad than was absolutely necessary.

“I can’t put off my journey, nor my engagements,” he said, “and it is impossible to say where I may be in Paris for some days to come. But I’ll tell you what I can do for you. If you can meet us at the railway station to-morrow morning you can see Stine there, and can bid her goodbye.”

“I see you are determined to part us altogether,” said Keefe bitterly.

“For the good of both,” said Fandango. “You must try to understand, my boy, that I am lifting your little friend into a sphere of life quite beyond yours, and that there could be no use in keeping up a connection that would one day end in a disappointment far more bitter than you are feeling now. I hope you understand me.”

“I don’t,” said Keefe bluntly. “My father was a gentleman, and I intend, besides, to make a name in the world for myself.”

“Very good,” said Fandango. “Do so, and then

come to me. Meanwhile, if you like to come to the train to-morrow morning, Stine will be glad to see you and say goodbye."

The last words were spoken from the motor, and the next moment the speaker was whirled away into the darkness.

He had, however, given the name of the railway station, and the hour for the departure of the train; and Keefe, as he strained wearily homewards, had at least the poor comfort of thinking that he was to see Stine again, if only for a few minutes, and that nothing could prevent his getting a promise from her of writing to him.

He had not gone far in the direction of home when he bethought him that if he went there he could hardly be at the railway station at the hour mentioned by Fandango. The station was comparatively near to the spot where he now stood, and very far away from the builder's dwelling in the east end of London. So he decided to walk about the streets for the rest of the night, so as to be at the trysting-place long before the hour for the start, waiting on the platform to see travellers arriving.

He kept walking all the streets within a certain area, trying to keep up a business-like pace, and to account for himself satisfactorily when challenged by night-watchmen. When very tired he leaned for a while against the wall of a house, looking up at dark opposite windows and smokeless chimneys with a new sudden sense of the miracle of sleep, that thing that seems so simple because we are so accustomed to it. Once he stopped a long time, fascinated by a dim light in a window where he knew by that token

there was sickness. He wondered, pitifully, in a kind of aside from his own trouble, who was sick, and whether it was sickness unto death, and whose watching heart was breaking on account of it.

Once he went into a coffee shelter and had some coffee; and getting into a corner, he fell into an uneasy sleep out of which he started, dreaming that he saw the train steaming away just as he got into the station. The pain of this was so great that, lest he should fall asleep again, he got out of the shelter and began his weary tramp once more, welcoming the dawn, and keeping his eyes and ears keenly aware of the faces of the clocks and of their bells that kept telling him the hour.

At last, long before the appointed time, he was in the station, thereby baffling the ingenuity of Stine’s captor, who had deliberately mentioned an hour somewhat later than the starting-time of the train.

Fandango’s intention in this had been to shorten a very undesirable interview, to ensure scantiness of farewell words, and to prevent demonstrations likely to attract notice that might follow him on his journey with ridicule. A treacherous suggestion that the boy might actually arrive too late had been unwillingly harboured. A sharp corner would thus have been turned more easily than he expected, a great awkwardness avoided, and a certain danger of future embarrassment done away with.

But as soon as he entered the station he saw the haggard face and expectant eyes of Keefe waiting for him. Friends had gathered to see the great singer off, and as the party moved along the platform, and Keefe came to meet them, Fandango hurried

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Stine into a carriage, hoping she had not caught sight of the miserable boy who was watching for her.

At the first moment Keefe hung back, stricken by the change in his little friend's appearance, a change which made her scarcely recognizable. This young lady in the long fur coat, exquisite shoes, and velvet hat could not be his little friend of the street crossing. And yet those were Stine's eyes questing about, as if looking for him. Fandango had indeed told her that he had seen Keefe by chance, and given him leave to come to the railway station and bid her good-bye; but at the same time he had warned her that it was very unlikely he could arrive in time, having to come on foot from so great a distance.

When Stine saw him she leaned out of the carriage window and waved her hand to him, and Keefe rushed forward headlong, and gripped her by both the hands. Alas! these were not the little warm fingers that used to hold him fast, but only things made of smooth kid that clasped his stiffly in spite of effort. But there was nothing wrong with Stine's eager eyes, except that their brightness was drowned in a downpour of tears.

"Oh, Stine, is it you?" cried Keefe.

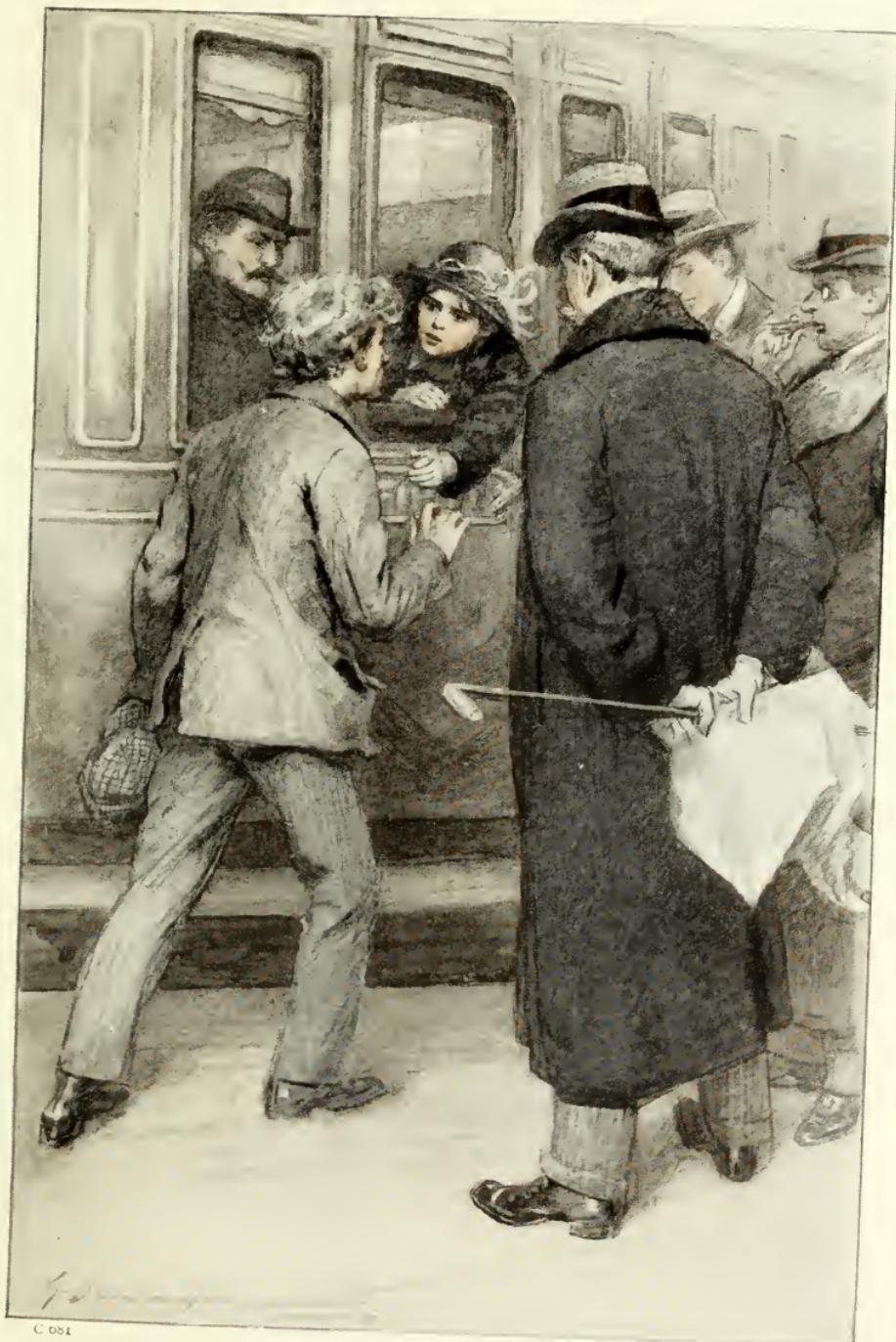
"Oh, Keefe, it's me! I'm going."

Fandango's friends were staring.

"A poor servant boy," said Fandango, "who was very fond of my little niece as a small child. I had to allow him to come to the train."

The window was still open, and at another signal from Stine the boy surged up to it.

"Your street, Keefe! What is the name of your street?" cried the girl wildly.



C 081

“YOUR STREET, KEEFE! WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR STREET?
CRIED THE GIRL WILDLY”

“New Brick Street, number sixty,” shouted Keefe, as the whistle sounded and the train began to move.

“What a fool I was to let him come!” said Fandango to himself. But Stine hung out of the window till the figures on the platform grew small and a curve of the rails swept the platform out of sight.

It was past the hour for going to work when Keefe got back, tired and footsore, to New Brick Street. Underlying his weariness and his sorrow there was a conviction that his uncle would never forgive him for staying out all night, and that probably he would be homeless on the streets before the day was over.

But he had seen Stine, and he knew why she had not written to him. She had forgotten the name of the street, but now she knew it. He would have a letter from her. And he would pick up work somewhere, if it was to be only blacking boots. Sib would keep the letter for him.

“Oh, Sib!” he said; for there she was at the door, looking out for him.

“So you’ve come back!” she said. “What under the heavens have you been doing to yourself?”

A few words told her the adventure of the night and morning.

“Of course I expect that my uncle will turn me out,” said Keefe.

“You’re in luck, as it happens,” said Sib. “Sam came home last night with a sup of drink in his head, and he’s not up yet. Turn you in to the office, and I’ll bring you a cup of tea and a mouthful. And you can come in at breakfast time as if nothing had happened.”

So Keefe turned in, thankful that no storm of

angry temper was to break over his already sufficient wretchedness, and he laid his head down on the desk and cried as bitterly as if he had been only a girl.

“A poor servant boy!” he muttered, when the passion subsided. “Is that all I am ever to be, Mr. Fandango? We’re going to see, sir.”

CHAPTER IX

“People Do What They Want to Do”

ALL day at his work Keefe was thinking the matter out, and he found it impossible to remain hopeless and miserable. After a night's sleep the first thoughts that came across his mind were that Stine was still his faithful little friend, and that she would write to him.

“And if I am not to see her again till I have made myself a good name and place in the world, then the sooner I set about doing it the better. Only how I am going to do it is the question,” he reflected.

As soon as he was free in the evening he set out to visit Mrs. Milsom. But, climbing the stairs of the tenement, he found she was not there, and that other people were in her garret. Nobody knew where she had gone, and nobody had time either to care or to enquire.

Keefe went down the stairs again, remembering that Fandango had given her money to set her up in a more decent lodging and in a better way of life. But how was he, Keefe, now to find her? The week—so full of bitter sorrow and anxiety—that had elapsed since he last saw her had made a gap which, at first, it seemed impossible for him to bridge. And he wanted to keep hold of the Milsoms as the one link

with Stine now left to him. It was a link that only touched the past, of course; but still, in this moment of desolation, it was worth taking a grip of before it slipped away into the outer darkness of the things that, despite our longing, are cruelly past and gone from us for ever.

Casting about for possibilities, Keefe thought of poor old Joss Milsom, lying half-alive in his bed in the hospital home. If his wife should have found herself rich enough to take him home, then Keefe's last straw had gone down the current of the inevitable; and so it was with a qualm of dread that he presented himself at the door of the institution. The invalid might even have died, so great a part of Keefe's own life seemed to have been lived since he had seen him.

To his relief he found that Joss was living—still a member of the community of incurables—and that he was rather more lively than usual, and aware that some good fortune had overtaken his wife and family.

“Come to see me, they did,” he said, “dressed quite respectable. Don’t know where they got the money. I didn’t give it to them. I’ve nothing belongin’ to me in the world but the old coat that’s hangin’ on the nail there. I keep my ‘baccy in the pocket of it, and the nurse doesn’t take it from me. Here she is now, Keefe, and she’ll tell you the name of the place my missus is gone to. My head’s gone for names, but it’s a fine new place they’re livin’ in now. Some swell gave them money. I have no money to give them—nothin’ but the old coat hangin’ up there on the nail——”

So the old man kept on repeating himself. Keefe had been long familiar with the old coat that hung on

the nail beside his bed in the cubicle. He knew that it was a cherished possession of the poor old patient, whose whim in keeping it there was humoured by those in authority. It never got worn out as a coat, because it never was worn at all, and as a convenient pocket it was invaluable.

Keefe now tried to keep the conversation away from the subject of the coat, which, once started, became all-absorbing to the wandering mind of the owner. Another subject shunned as much as possible by old Milsom's visitors was the imaginary secret hugged by him—an intermittently haunting delusion of his weakening brain. The worst of it was that in avoiding the first subject one was almost sure to be driven into the second, and vice versa.

His wife and daughter had neither sympathy nor patience to bear with either of his whims and fancies, and consequently, when they came to see him, he was silent on the burning subjects. The nurses only laughed or smiled at him, or snubbed him, according to their mood; and so with them he was usually contemptuously silent. It was only to Keefe, whose kindly tact encouraged him, that he talked in his flighty, rambling way on his two matters of interest—the very convenient coat and the overpoweringly important secret.

“But I don't die with it,” he said now, as Keefe sat beside him, awaiting the opportunity of a pause in the old fellow's rambling chatter to tell him the story of Stine's extraordinary capture and removal from among her friends. Whether it was that Mrs. Milsom had not told him, or that he had forgotten, he appeared to have heard nothing of the matter.

"I'm not going to die yet, and there's no hurry. It wouldn't be honest to die and not to tell. I couldn't trust any of them to do the right thing. So I'm waiting, Keefe, and when the time comes you'll help me out of it."

Keefe promised every help of whatever kind required, and, putting in a word here and there, sat listening to the half-crazy ramblings till at last the old man became suddenly silent and was fast asleep.

"I must only come again," said Keefe. "I had something to tell him, but he wouldn't listen."

"He does ramble on," said the nurse. "I think he won't live much longer."

"I want to know his wife's new address," said Keefe. "I hope you can give it to me."

"Yes," said the nurse. "Mrs. Milsom gave it to me, and I wrote it down."

For this Keefe was thankful, and his next evening visit was to the Milsoms in their new abode.

Mrs. Milsom had taken a small two-story house in a much better neighbourhood than that of the tenement, and had already established herself there with two or three working men as lodgers, and a fair amount of slopwork from a respectable tailor. The little place was clean and bright, and the poor woman herself looked tidy and contented. The small boys also showed much improvement. But the most altered person of the group was the girl Mattie, who was trim and smart, her fair shaggy locks brushed and plaited, and her cotton blouse and skirt neatly put on.

Mrs. Milsom laughed almost hysterically when she saw Keefe.

“You wouldn’t know us!” she said. “How did you find us? I thought it strange that you didn’t come all week before we changed. And we were all so busy I wasn’t able to send you a message. The boys couldn’t find the way from here, and there’s Mattie, that’s clever enough, but she’s turned so useful to me and so good that I can’t do without her. It’s a great thing, for I was afraid I’d miss Stine terrible. And how is she now she’s a young lady? You’ve been to see her every day, I suppose?”

“No,” said Keefe. “Fandango doesn’t want us to know her since he has got her. He has taken her away to Paris. I saw her for a minute at the train when they were starting off——”

“Well, there, Keefe, don’t you fret about it. She’ll be well done for, and isn’t that everything? Not every baby that’s saved out of a shipwreck with nobody belonging to it finds a great rich gentleman to take it and make a child of his own of it. And you, Keefe, that wasn’t much better to begin with—mind you stick to the good uncle that took you up and is puttin’ you into his fine business, if you’ll only get fond of it.”

Keefe listened to her without a word. He had fore-known all that Mrs. Milsom would say to him. The poor woman’s experience of the hungry-and-harbourless tragedies of life had rendered her almost incapable of estimating as serious the sorrows that are above and beyond the considerations of food and shelter, and uncontrolled by such overwhelming forces as un supplied bodily requirements. While he had an arm round each of the small boys that came and stood at his knees he was watching Mattie, fascinated by

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the change in her face, which was as remarkable as the plaiting of her hair and the neat tie of her shoe-strings. Her eyes were shining with some kind of excitement, and there was colour in her cheeks. Keefe had never noticed her before as looking pretty and intelligent.

“You saw Stine going off in the train,” she said, looking keenly at Keefe. “What kind of dress had she on?”

“I couldn’t tell you,” said Keefe; “but it was a young lady’s dress and very pretty.”

“Oh!” said Mattie. “Go on!”

“I think she had a velvet hat and a fur cloak.”

“Go on!” repeated Mattie. “Were they red or blue or purple?”

“I think the hat was blue,” said Keefe, “and you know what fur is.”

“All rich brown,” said Mattie, drawing a deep breath. “My, what a swell she was! I suppose he will give her jewellery. Did you see any?”

“No,” said Keefe, “and what does it matter?”

“It matters a lot!” said Mattie. “I wish it was me that had got a grand blue hat and a fur coat and jewellery! It’s too bad that Stine should have gone and got everything and me nothing.”

“That’s the way she goes on,” said Mrs. Milsom. “Mattie, as didn’t used to care to wash her face or tie up her hair, there she is now thinkin’ she had ought to get a fur coat and jew’l’ry because Stine has got it. But I don’t complain if it makes her think about keepin’ herself tidy a bit. Stine was a deal cleaner and carefuller of herself than ever you were, Mattie, I says to her, or the gentleman wouldn’t

have took such a fancy to her. And I declare but ever since that little girl of mine has been behavin' all round as if she was somebody else, only I don't see what side of us another great rich millionaire is goin' to drop down from."

“There's no knowing how it comes round,” said Mattie.

“Another good thing is,” said Mrs. Milsom, “that she's mindin' her school. And she goes in the evening to learn type-writin'. I only hope she'll stick to it, and then maybe she'll get on in a natural honest way of her own, without anything wonderful happenin' to her.”

Mattie tossed her head and looked unutterable things at the ceiling. It seemed as if she saw up there a vision of her future, fascinating to herself but invisible to everybody else. After a few more moments Keefe got a further surprise by seeing her set about making a comfortable cup of tea for him and her mother.

“Oh yes, Mattie's a different girl!” said Mrs. Milsom, observing her movements with admiration. “I'm not afraid now but what she'll do very well for herself in the world. When Stine was here there wasn't as much want for Mattie to be useful. I was very fond of Stine, but she wasn't my own child; and I'm very glad she's well done for, that I am, for even though we're better off a lot than we were, there's enough of us.”

When Keefe got up to go away, Mattie put on her hat, quite a neat straw hat with a bit of fresh ribbon round it, and said: “I'll walk a bit of the way with you;” and they went out together.

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“Of course you’ll be writing to Stine,” said Mattie, “and going to see her in Paris after a while.”

“How could I go to Paris?” said Keefe.

“I don’t know; but people do what they want to do, and you’ll go.”

“Well?” said Keefe.

“You must tell her that she’ll have to do something for me. My father saved her or she wouldn’t be alive, and my mother kept her or she’d be in the workhouse and no rich gentleman comin’ to look for her. There’s more owed to us for all that than the money the man gave to my mother.”

“Is there?” said Keefe.

“Of course there is.”

“I’m afraid I am not likely to see Stine for many a long day,” said Keefe.

“You must,” said Mattie.

“If Stine ever has it in her power to help your mother I am sure she will do it without being told by anybody.”

“My mother is old,” said Mattie. “She must help me.”

When Mattie had left him, Keefe was tempted to wish for a moment that Fandango had taken Mattie, with her ambitious heart, and left Stine. He groaned at the selfishness of the wish and stifled it.

CHAPTER X

The Dreams of Keefe

KEEFE settled down to wait patiently for the letter from Stine which was sure to come, gathering up the brighter threads of his life and weaving them into his days with as few as possible of the breaks and knots that disfigure and might ruin the web.

His old ambition, which Stine had understood and shared, now came to his assistance, and he threw himself with greater ardour than ever into the studies that must lead to the realization of his earnest desires.

He had been used to spend his free evenings at an art school of design, had gained prizes for his drawings of architectural subjects, and had won the approval of the master and the sympathies of the students. Even those who were of a more refined class admired the big boy in his rough jacket and dusty shoes who came in hot haste from his day's work with no more than time to wash his hands before they seized the pencil, and who possessed a power which even if some might envy no one could ignore or deny.

Keefe now went back to the school and to the dreams that haunted the big room where in an atmosphere of peace and hope he wrought with his pencil,

copied perfect forms, and created original bits of beauty. The approach to this centre of study and inspiration was through a gallery of choice pictures and a hall lined with noble sculptures, and the effect of such a passage was to clear the student's mind of the coarser elements of thought and sense, and to prepare it for the hour of intercourse with a lofty ideal.

Returning to this beloved and absorbing work, Keefe was reminded sadly of the last evening when he had met Stine at the crossing. On that very day, being out on his uncle's business, he had got an opportunity of speaking with an architect, who had looked at some of his drawings and given him encouragement.

He was now mindful of that encouragement. The hour was all too short to be wasted, and as he worked his spirits rose, for the indomitable energy of genius blotted out everything for the moment save the joy of creation and the ambition to excel. When the passion of that dream-hour was spent, the fire of it still lingered about him, and there was little sleep for his busy brain that night. In his own little room, after the rest of the household was asleep, he drew out the box from under his bed, took from it candle, books, and papers, and sat down to his studies till daylight.

To scare sleep away he put his head in a basin of water and rubbed up his hair till the fair locks stood on end, and then drank the cup of strong tea granted by Sib to his entreaties. Sib was good; but why did a woman think that a few hours asleep were better able to help a man to his object in life than the same hours awake and concentrated on his purpose?

Like many another young enthusiastic worker, on fire with the fire of dreams, he thought it a cruel tyranny of nature that half of human life must be spent in idle unconsciousness. The sun never rests, nor does the earth itself in its course, and why are the faculties of man so heavily taxed to produce something worth the effort that would require all his time?

The books round him now were such as he could procure for these night vigils, supplementary to the more important works accessible to him in the public library where he spent all the hours he could spare from his practical studies in the School of Art. His brightest dreams were of great monuments yet to be erected for all time to come, cathedrals and palaces more beautiful than any yet seen by mortal eyes; and when given up to such dreams he read Ruskin and the tales of travellers in Spain and the East, and descriptions of the splendours of stone and marble to be found in Italy and France.

His practical knowledge of his uncle's business had made him keenly alive to possibilities for the creation of more grace and nobility than had been hitherto attempted in the common buildings of everyday life, especially in the dwellings, however humble, in which men and women have to spend their years. When he could manage it, he bought a copy of a publication for builders and architects called *Designer and Hodman*, in which he found much suggestion and information of a kind to counterbalance the bewitching influence of such books as the *Stones of Venice* and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

His eyes had long hated the ugly forms of the

streets and houses surrounding him, and very readily he accepted the belief that the homes of the poor, if generously designed, need not be absolutely hideous. If he were a qualified architect, as he intended to become (were he to turn the very stones of the London pavements to attain to his purpose), he thought he could design a city for the poor which would give the inhabitants beauty for their minds as well as comfort for their bodies. As for where the money was to come from, it was time enough to think about that. The world was overfilled with millionaires who did not know what to do with their capital. Looking that way life was hopeful, with rainbow possibilities.

At this time Sam Stonewall held the contract for some buildings in course of erection, and Keefe, in attending to a share of the work, had an occasional opportunity of seeing the architect in whom he had confided, and who had given him encouragement. He now began a drawing which he finished after a few more nights of persistent industry, and which he submitted to this friendly judgment, with the result that the architect proposed to Keefe's uncle to take the boy into his own office as pupil or apprentice.

The only consequence of the suggestion was an explosion of wrath from Sam Stonewall. He to see his beggarly nephew drop the work that paid for his keep, and go off to take up another trade, with the intention of turning himself into a fine gentleman! And not only that, but was he, Sam, expected to pay out his own hard-earned money in fees to another man, who was at the same time to benefit by the boy's services, which would be for ever lost to his uncle and benefactor?

So there was an end of that short dream.

But the mere fact that the architect thought he would be a promising pupil was fuel to the fire of Keefe's enthusiasm. If only he could tell the whole of this matter with all its meanings and bearings to Stine! But her letter had not come, and how was he to reach her?

Sib was a sympathetic listener, but her view of the affair was only half what he wanted it to be. Her mature, motherly brain understood the boy's disappointment, and her kind heart strove to heal the wound, but where were the keen, higher wits and artistic instinct that had so readily reflected his own ideas as the facets of a diamond catch the light?

"After all," said Sib, "what do you want with more teaching? Haven't you the school and your books? When you are a man, and have your own hand in the business, can't you build anything you like your own way and no quarrelling about it? Sam will be getting older as well as you. None of us can stand still as we are. And when the young ones get the upper hand the old ones have to give up to them."

"I don't want to get the upper hand here," said Keefe. "I want to get the upper hand of the world!"

She laughed, and told him to put nonsense out of his head and take his soup. She delighted in his bold hopes, though she so little understood what they tended to. She had no doubt at all that some day Keefe might get a contract to build a new palace for the King of England, and that if he did he would do it in a very superior fashion. But farther than that

her understanding of Keefe's aspirations did not go. The difference between an architect and a builder was not exactly clear to her.

Keefe took her consolations as he took her soup, finding both helpful to the mind as well as to the body, and was well aware in his young masculine way that his life would be infinitely more unbearable if Sib were not a part of it. Putting aside her views of his ultimate ambition, he took from her kind eyes increase of patience to await the tardy coming of Stine's letter, the letter that seemed as slow to arrive from Paris as from a hotel in London, but was nevertheless absolutely counted on as a reliable quantity in the future of things.

Without waiting for it to the last moment of its delay, he set about to answer it, saying to himself that when it did arrive he could add a long postscript and affix the date. Having hit on this excellent plan, he found the writing of the letter an exquisite relief, a most happy vent for the repressed feelings of his heart and the teeming thoughts of his brain.

It was the very first time he had ever spoken so freely to anybody. His talks with Stine, happy and helpful as they were, had always been necessarily short and scrappy, because so interrupted and carried on under such distracting surroundings—street uproar and the presence of uncongenial or uncomprehending witnesses or companions. He had never attempted to pour himself out on paper before. Now the real Keefe came forth, the spirit that lived behind that broad brow, swept by the dipping lock of fair hair so often tossed back with an impatient shake of the head as he bent over his writing. At least the spirit got

as much expression as such a spirit is likely to get in words, so elusive are meanings, so inexpressive and scanty is language.

The letter was written day after day, or rather night after night, till it seemed to amount to a diary, and yet there came not the letter from Stine to which it was intended to be a reply. Still, Keefe never lost faith in the little friend who had stretched both hands to him out of the railway carriage. But his fear that Fandango was resolved to cut him off was confirmed.

When he visited the Milsoms he had to endure their questions and pronouncements. Mrs. Milsom was philosophic and resigned in her manner of accepting the situation.

"It's nothin' but what was to be expected, Keefe," she said, "and it's what I told you from the first. It's the way of the world, and might have been worse. One person is set up above another, or how would there be ups and downs, and millionaires and beggars, as is? You've only to look to yourself, my boy, and never mind frettin' more about the good fortune of another."

Mattie's remarks were more annoying.

"I call it nasty and horrid of Stine," she said, "going away to be a swell and forgetting all about those that were good to her. If I could get my way to Paris wouldn't I find her out and walk into her, and tell her what she is! If I was a boy or a man I'd work my passage there, as you could do if you had the spirit."

"What do you think I ought to do if I were there?" said Keefe. "Torment Stine and beg from Fandango?"

"Hold your tongue, Mattie, and mind your own business," said her mother. "Keefe has proper pride. And oh, Keefe, when you go to the hospital don't say anything about Stine to my poor husband! He'd be mad at me for lettin' her go. And it's easy to keep anything from him now, for he forgets everything the next minute."

CHAPTER XI

The Letter that was Not Posted

WHEN Fandango had got Stine on board the packet for France he drew her hand through his arm and walked up and down the deck with her.

"Now, my dear," he said, "you have been gratified by saying goodbye to your friend, and you must cheer up and cease to worry yourself about him. These people were good to you when you had no father, but now they are not in your class of life, and it is better that you should be at a little distance from them. And I desire that you will not talk about them to my friends. I wish you to be accepted as my niece, and you must perceive how awkward it would be for me if you were to put me in a difficulty by explaining matters. I see that you have a grateful nature, and I hope you will be good to me, as I will be good to you."

Stine choked back a sob and tried to speak.

"Answer me, my dear little girl."

"I will write to Keefe," she said tremulously, but with determination.

Fandango once again felt sorry for the necessity of appearing cruel, and reflected a few moments before he said:

"Of course you will write to him. And if he is as clever as he thinks he is, he may live to do us credit.

In the meantime he must go his own way and we must go ours. Here is Mrs. Petworth coming, and looking pleased to see you. You ought to be very proud of her notice, for she is a person of distinction. I hardly expected the good fortune of meeting her again in this way. Now, no more tears!"

Mrs. Petworth passed them with a bow and a glance that did not betray the fact that she had observed the little girl's face of sorrow.

"No affair of mine," she said, as she had said once before in the hotel. But before the short voyage was over she had seated Stine beside her on the deck, and was talking to her quietly about the beauty of the clouds, and of the waves, and of the birds that soared and dipped about the vessel, sweeping the air and riding on the sea.

Fandango, well satisfied with the arrangement, went away to smoke, knowing that he himself was not attractive to the lady except occasionally in his character of interpreter of beautiful music; and as he smoked he questioned what was that something about the little girl (his little girl) that fascinated one so high-minded and of a refinement so supreme as was Mrs. Petworth.

Before parting at the end of the journey to Paris the lady requested Señor Fandango to allow his little niece to visit her in her *appartement* in the Champs Élysées.

At this time Fandango, the great tenor of European celebrity, was making more money than he knew how to spend, being neither a gambler in any form, nor a gourmet, nor a lover of wine—having, in fact, none of the serious vices that dissipate wealth, though he

was not absolutely without his peculiar share of human faults and weaknesses. He enjoyed a certain kind of Bohemian society, and cultivated it in every capital visited by him in turn in the pursuit of his profession. In such society he was always welcomed as a delightful entertainer of friends, and though it could not be said that he aimed at favour from personages of a higher rank than his own, yet he was always exceedingly gratified when sought by them.

On his arrival in Paris on this occasion he established himself in princely style in one of the first-class hotels, and enjoyed Stine's wonder and admiration of the splendour and luxury around her. He lost no time in taking her to see Mrs. Petworth in her more refined and dainty *appartement*, and it was after this visit had been pleasantly accomplished that Stine sat down to write her letter to Keefe.

She was not accustomed to writing letters, but her keen wits had enabled her to profit by her schooling, and she wrote a legible though childish hand. Her grammar and spelling were rather deficient, but she could put on paper something of what she wanted to say. Keefe would understand her, even when she failed to express herself properly. Amended and corrected, her letter was like this:

“ DEAR KEEFE,

“ I don't feel so lonely since you told me New Brick Street, and you must not fret about me, because I am so well off as you could never imagine, and the gentleman [here the name Fandango was written twice with uncertain spelling and impatiently erased] is so kind and gives me everything. I have to call him Uncle, though I never liked uncles on account of yours. I think

from what he says he will be good to you too, after a while, and I try not to cry, though I do long to see you.

"An awful nice lady in the London hotel is here in Paris too, and is ever so kind to me. She lives in lovely rooms, with pictures and china and statues, and gold on the walls. She says it is only gilding. There is a lot of gold in this hotel. My looking-glass has it, and my chairs, and my carpet is all over roses. The curtains in my nice lady's rooms are all lace. You never saw anything like the food in these places. I wish Mammy Milsom and Mattie and the boys had it. I feel sick eating, because they haven't got it.

"How are you, dear Keefe, and have you more news for me about the drawings? I shall watch for your letter. The hotel is at the top of this paper. We are to live here for some time. My new uncle says you are clever and will get on, and of course I know that. The best of it is for me that my dear lady here is to see about getting me taught things I ought to know. Perhaps it will be going to school. She calls it classes. After that I will be able to write to you better, and tell you everything, and be more fit to be your little friend. I am always thinking about you, and I pray to God for you night and morning. I wish you could come over to Paris at once, but Uncle says it wouldn't do. Sometimes I think I must be dreaming, only I don't wake up. Everything in the world is different. I couldn't tell you. Dear Keefe, give my love to all the Milsoms. Uncle says the money he gave them will make them all right. It is the only good of me being carried away like this.

"Be sure to write soon and tell me everything, and then I will write again and tell you more. There is so much here it is hard to tell it.

"Your loving little

"STINE."

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She had finished her letter, and put it up and addressed it, when Fandango came into the luxurious private sitting-room where she was writing and looked over her shoulder and read the superscription. He had not expected that she could have written so well and so quickly.

“Give me your letter,” he said, “and I will put it with my own, and they will go to the post together.”

“Oh, thank you!” said Stine. “I wonder how soon he will get it?”

“I wonder!” said Fandango musingly, and put the letter with his own and went out of the room.

He paused on the stairs, and stood for half a minute as if struck by an urgent question. This letter in his hand—was he prudent in posting it? Such a correspondence, once opened, would it not be the beginning of trouble? The breaking of the meaningless childish tie between these two young creatures had been almost accomplished, with sufficient inconvenience. Would not the renewal of it be the height of folly?

He went on down the stairs, not yet quite sure of what he was going to do. Of one thing he was convinced, that if he could resist Stine’s tears and entreaties for a certain time—till she had been well started on her new track in life—he would be following a wiser course for her and for himself than if he weakly allowed himself to be led by her.

He had not absolutely made up his mind when, instead of placing Stine’s letter among others to be posted, he put it in his pocket, lit a cigar, and went out to take a stroll.

As he went he reflected on the situation, which

seemed so important a crisis. Though living so much in the world, he had been a lonely man at heart. With extraordinary rapidity a change had taken place, and a child had become his first object in life. Her welfare was in his hands; her future would be his care; her affections were due to him who had promised to be a father to her. It was imperative that she should be altogether his.

Providence had befriended him in his uncertainty as to the first steps to be taken with regard to the girl's education. Mrs. Petworth had made arrangements for her attendance at classes approved of by the lady's superior taste and judgment, and Stine's quick intelligence and energy had already given promise of a harvest to be reaped from such advantages.

When sojourning in other cities the same educational procedure would be continued. Mrs. Petworth had friends in all the great social centres of Europe frequented by Fandango the singer. He shrank from the idea of sending the girl away from him to school. The filial tie, just beginning to bind her to him, would in that case be snapped, and might be difficult of readjustment. "Oh no, he would never part with her!" he said, with a thrill of jealousy.

And this Keefe. From dreams of Stine's future wound up with his own he returned to the big boy in his dusty coat and rough shoes, with that anguished claim on Stine in his haggard face and tearful eyes. Let him return to his work with his relative the builder, and forget his little chance companion of the crossing.

Putting aside the possibilities of romance and the chance that he might by a special talent rise to something higher in life than the laying together of bricks

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and mortar, what was to be rationally expected of the builder's nephew? Fandango saw him in imagination a vulgar, importunate man, following Stine about the world, turning up at awkward moments, working on the kind feelings, perhaps the pity, of the girl raised far above him in breeding and position, whose earliest friend he would declare himself to be.

Having dreamed one of his long dreams, and accepted it as reality, Fandango dropped the future for the present, and drew the letter given him by Stine out of his pocket.

“Better settle the matter at once,” he said. “Shall I open it and see what she says? No. Let it go for what it is worth with all the rest of the trouble!”

He tore the letter into tiny fragments and scattered them as he walked, satisfied that, in spite of weak good nature, he had behaved with common sense and moral courage.

CHAPTER XII

Cut off Short

As the weeks passed on, bringing no news, Keefe became fully convinced of the fact that Fandango was resolved to cut him off from Stine for ever.

Well, even if he had the means of travelling never so poorly he would not dog Fandango's steps and hang round Stine like a beggar. The singer had bid him make himself a gentleman if he were clever enough, and meet them again when fit to do them credit. On that understanding he must let the matter rest.

“But I will never forgive him,” said Keefe, “until he acknowledges my fitness and asks my pardon. I can track him all over the world by his singing, and when I am ready to meet him I will order him to sing me a song of my choosing.”

His only comfort was the diary, adding something to it from time to time, keeping it for Stine, and he threw himself with burning eagerness into his studies of architecture. He spent every holiday hour in the British Museum, or in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's, when not in the School of Art, and occasionally, with a drawing in hand, he presented himself to the friendly architect who had prophesied good things of him, and had offered to take him as a pupil. His

all-night studies continued. Sib contrived to keep knowledge of the extravagance in lamp oil and candles from his uncle, but Sam began to notice that in proportion as Keefe grew tall he became paler and slighter, and appeared less strong for work—a change in the sturdy boy that caused him irritation rather than excited his sympathy.

“If he’s goin’ to be a Miss Molly I’ll have none of him,” he said to Sib. “His mind isn’t with his work——”

“Now, Sam, he’s very industrious,” said Sib.

“I don’t say he’s idle,” said the builder, “but he’s thinkin’ of some nonsense that isn’t our business. And there’s Mason, the master stonemason, is wantin’ me to take his son for an apprentice. So you needn’t try to hide your fine gentleman under your apron, my woman. If he doesn’t look sharp I’ll kick him out!”

Things went on like this a little longer. Keefe had almost ceased his visits to the Milsoms. Mattie’s taunts and her mother’s philosophic comfortings and counsels were alike painful to him. The old man in the hospital home no longer found any pleasure in seeing him, and scarcely recognized him. He could do nothing to benefit any of them. The woman and her children were thriving and comfortable in their new way of life, thanks to the generosity of Fandango. When he went to see them the praises of the great singer rang in his unwilling ears. Stine was unfaithful to her early friends, and Keefe had no spirit, was the cry of Mattie. Stine was forgetful and thankless like the rest of the world, and Keefe had proper pride, was the decision of Mrs. Milsom. But everyone was bound to be grateful to Fandango.

Keefe, roaming through Westminster Abbey with Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* under his arm, studying the glories around him and sitting down in a corner to refer to his book, lost his sorrow in his joy in beauty and splendour of form, and in his dreams of a widening and strengthening ambition. In imagination he was creating a vast pile which should equal the Abbey in magnificence. A new style might be originated, but not too far removed from the ancient ideal. Oh, to see all the perfect monuments of the world as described and lectured on by Ruskin! Could a boy or a man not walk Europe with a wallet on his back and a stick in his hand, and in some way or other earn his bread from day to day while trudging from place to place to perfect his knowledge and improve his ideal? Could he do it without being a beggar? And how earn enough money just to take him on such a pilgrimage?

Sam Stonewall, his harsh step-uncle, gave him nothing but food and clothing, and was less and less disposed to be generous or even just to him in proportion as his nephew's dissatisfaction with the builder's calling became more evident. There was no hope that way, and yet Keefe resolved to be faithful in the discharge of duties undertaken for his hard employer until such time as he could honestly see his way to leaving them behind him.

With all his efforts at fidelity to present duty in daily work he was sometimes absent in mind while engaged in watching hodmen ascending and descending ladders, or the operations of slaters on a roof, or of men putting chimneypots on the chimneys of an ugly house. And so it was that one day a crisis in

his fortunes arrived unexpectedly, shunting him on to new lines, while the old tracks of his early years were suddenly and for ever left behind him.

“Light against dark, and dark against light.” Ruskin’s words were in his thoughts, and a splendid illustration of that text was before his mind’s eye as he gazed, unseeing, upwards at Stonewall’s workmen. A more wideawake consciousness of what was actually going on around him would probably have saved him from the heavy falling stone that dropped on his foot and crushed it. As it was, the foot was dangerously hurt, and he was carried to the nearest hospital for treatment of accidents.

The blow had fallen, as such blows in life usually fall, without a moment’s warning. A great event that seemed to come of the chance of a moment had arrived. Keefe had left his employer’s house that morning to return to it no more.

At first this did not seem a necessary consequence of the accident. Stonewall growled and scolded Sib, and bade her go to the hospital and warn Keefe to get well as soon as he was able to, and get back to his work. But the crush of the foot was a dangerous injury. Lockjaw was feared, and was only prevented by skill and careful nursing. It was evident that a long time must elapse before Keefe could hope to stand on both feet, or to move without a crutch.

Sam swore big oaths, and declared that if the boy had been minding his business the accident would not have occurred. For once he had hit on the truth, and Keefe admitted it to Sib when she stood by his bedside, shedding tears and pressing him to eat the dainties she had brought him.

"He's right enough," said Keefe. "I was not minding my business. I didn't know where I was standing at the moment. I was somewhere else. As soon as I'm able to leave this place I must make a change. And don't you fret, Sib; I'll get something to do."

"You can't be cut off short like that!" said Sib. But Sam Stonewall thought differently.

"A fellow on a crutch will be no use to me," he said. "I want an active man. Mason's been talking to me again, and I've agreed to take his son. And your pet Keefe will easy enough get in as clerk somewhere. He's all right at accounts, and he writes a good hand. That architect chap that thinks so much of him will get him a place."

"You'll take him in till he gets something, Sam; I know you will," said Sib.

"And I know I won't!" vociferated Sam. "If I take him in now I'll never get rid of him again. So he'd better begin to look about him at once."

Sib dried her tears, and began to make plans. It was evident that Keefe, at the moment of necessary departure from hospital, would not be in a state to apply for work anywhere with a chance of success. Doctors recommended idleness and change to country air, to the pure air of a mountain country if possible.

Upon this, Sib, being a person of resource, with a brain fertile in expedients, took matters into her own hands and prepared a way for the boy out of his difficulty of the hour.

"Now, Keefe," she said, "you're going over to Ireland, to stay with my mother till you get strong. Her little cottage isn't a grand place, but it's snug

enough for you. You can hobble about there as long as you like, and she'll give you the best she has; and when you're ready to throw away the crutch, it's you will have the grandest country in the world to walk about in! And don't I wish it was myself instead of you that was going to walk on the top of the cliffs in County Clare, and hear the waves roarin' under my feet, and the sea-birds cryin' over my head!"

She paused, out of breath with excitement.

"To Ireland!" exclaimed Keefe, amazed at so unexpected a proposal.

"Now, why not? And you an Irishman yourself! Don't you know your name is Kavanagh, and not Stonewall at all, except by the notion Sam had in givin' you his own name for the business. And now he has done with you, you can go back to your own. And it's no harm for you to have a look at your father's country. He was a good man and a gentleman, and held his head high till luck went against him and sickness carried him off."

Keefe listened.

"It's a dream, Sib," he said. "I've no money for trips."

"You can borrow it from me," said Sib. "It's Sam's own fault if I've had to save up a little in a stockin' unknown to him. I've earned it hard, and it's my own. So have you earned more than ever he gave you. And you needn't make any objection to taking what I'll spend on you. I'm goin' to get you ready now for a new start in life, and may God bless you and give you good luck in it!"

Keefe could not make objection, for he was powerless in that hour. Putting his faith in Providence

and Sib, and throwing himself into her plans, he prepared to obey her, while she busied herself in putting together the things he would need, and packing a little kit with comfortable clothing for him. When all was ready she transferred him from the hospital to a lodging within more easy reach of her ministrations, and this without saying a word about the matter to Sam Stonewall, who was busy installing Mason's son, the new apprentice, in his nephew's place, justifying his own conduct in occasional growls to his wife while smoking his pipe and watching her flying knitting needles.

"Best for every man to be at what fits him," he said. "Let Keefe go and be a gentleman if he likes, sitting at a desk and drawin' out grand plans for people that's askin' for them. Young Mason knows that what people wants is a place to eat and sleep in, with a sound roof over their heads, and not castles nor cathedrals. A snail has a house on his back and a man hasn't, so he wants it built for him. That's common-sense business, and it's what we have here."

He knew very well that Sib was looking after Keefe, though he pretended to know nothing about it. If Sib had asked him for a little money for the boy, he would have given it, though with a good many oaths and grumbles, but he was better pleased that she managed without troubling him.

Mason was a youth after his own heart, and Keefe was not. Mason brought him a fee, and Keefe had to be supported by his employer. The new assistant was altogether a benefit, while Keefe had been an encumbrance. The present state of things was quite satisfactory to Sam, but, all the same, he had a doubt

in his mind as to whether Keefe might not one day prove a credit to him, somehow or other; and, in his own way, he admired Sib for sticking to the outcast, and knitting the stockings which he guessed were intended for him.

“‘Bake me a bannock, and roast me a collop, and I’ll go away and seek my fortune,’” said Keefe. “‘You put me in mind of the fairy tales, Sib.’”

This was when she was taking him, crutch and kit and all, to the railway station, to start for Ireland.

“And the like of them always conquered the world,” said Sib. “It’s a roundabout way to the big world to go by the County Clare, but many a by-road turns out to be a short cut, and you’ll maybe arrive sooner where you want to go than some that’s drivin’ in a coach and six by the highroad.”

To Keefe’s impatient ambition it did seem a round-about way; but he was thankful to be put on any path of travel with his damaged foot, and Sib saw in his eyes the gratitude he could not put into words.

“And if it’s castles and churches you want,” said Sib, “you’ll see plenty of them, mostly in ruins, of course, but maybe you’ll get lessons from them——”

“It’s health and strength I want now, and, please God, I’ll get it, thanks to Him and you,” said Keefe. “And you’ll say goodbye to the Milsoms for me.”

“Oh yes, as much as they deserve!” said Sib. “They might have looked after you better in hospital. The mother’s busy, of course, but Mattie’s a minx, and I’ll have nothing to do with her. She’d rather hang glass ear-rings in her ears than bring you a flower or an orange. But I’ll give you word

of them. And mind you tell me how you get on with my mother——”

Then the whistle sounded, and Keefe was whirled away into a world of new experiences, with his little kit of clothing, and his box of books and drawing materials.

CHAPTER XIII

“It Needn’t be Ugly”

KEEFE had never been out of London since his earliest childhood, and his memory of the places men live in was bounded by streets. Now, even the features of the journey to Holyhead were a revelation to him. The sea, never sighted before, was a joy and a wonder, and the travel across Ireland, with its seas, rivers, and mountains, lifted still higher the veil that had hidden the face of Nature’s fairest beauty from his young eyes.

“Is it Granny Cronin’s house you’re lookin’ for?” asked the driver of the car that carried him from a country railway station. “Myself knows her well. No one better. Oh! and it’s her that has the snug little home kept up for her by her rich daughter that lives in London. Went away to earn her bread, she did, the same Sib, and married a rich husband that settled thousands on her. London’s on your portmancy, sir. Maybe you know her?”

“I know her,” said Keefe.

“See that now! I suppose all the people in London know each other. Why wouldn’t they? And is it true, sir, what they say, that Sib’s grand husband is to be the next Lord Mayor of London?”

“I haven’t heard anything about that,” said Keefe.

"There's good fortune owin' to her anyhow," said the driver; "for a better daughter never stepped than Sib. And the whole of good nature was in her. I was at the National School with her myself, and all the lads of us did be runnin' after her."

"She's just as good-natured still," said Keefe.

"See that now! And her with silks and satins trailin' after her, and strings of diamonds round her neck. But here we're comin' to the very place you want. Mrs. Cronin, ma'am, I've brought you a lodger that has come all the way from London and knows your daughter."

Mrs. Cronin's cottage stood on the roadside a few miles inland from the little seaside town of Kilsynan, called for the good Saint Synan (or Senanus), celebrated in song and legends, and remarkable for the Saint's Well—a deep reservoir of crystal-pure water in the high fields above the town. Keefe heard its history as he left the little centre of life behind and was carried out into a wide open country, girdled in the far distance by grey and purple mountains dominating low hills, and by the blue line of the Atlantic.

"Here you are now, and herself watchin' for you," said the driver.

The cottage was whitewashed to a dazzling brilliance, neatly thatched, set upon a bit of high ground above the road, and approached by a few flagged steps through a little garden hedged all round with fuchsia bushes. The little whitewashed supports of the gate were crowned each with a large round stone, polished by the rolling ocean waves that had played ball with it through many a century, and the scarlet of the

fuchsias fringed the low white wall of the little enclosure.

The old woman who came down the path was a substantial figure in a neat black dress and white apron, with a little shawl of many hues crossed on her shoulders. The russet-apple tinge on her cheeks was enhanced by the whiteness of her hair and cap. The expression of her face was grave as well as kindly, and she looked like one who had more important links with the outer world than had most of her neighbours. Indeed, her consciousness of the rumour that her daughter’s husband would soon be Lord Mayor of London might almost have been seen in the set of the frill on her cap, for though she was far too wise to believe in it, yet the thought that some people did was pleasant enough to her.

She had been prudent in reserving the fact that the humbly appointed lad with his crutch and modest kit was the nephew of the prospective Lord Mayor of London. It was usual for Granny Cronin to lodge tourists or travellers in her snug little house, and Keefe was to be taken as a delicate boy who had been befriended by Granny Cronin’s aristocratic connections.

When the driver was gone, she descended from her dignity and gave a warmer and more familiar welcome to Keefe than she had at first bestowed on him. His supper was ready, and the best room in the cottage had been prepared for him.

“And well it is that two gents I had here are gone away in time,” she said as she unpacked his kit with careful hands, and looked with great respect at his books. “And sure they had their books with them

too. They did be goin' about the country makin' drawin's and lookin' at the old castles and places."

"It's just what I want to do," said Keefe.

"Well, dear, there's nothin' to hinder, as soon as you can do without the crutch," said Granny Cronin sympathetically. "And as for old castles, and abbeys, and the like o' that, there's plenty of them handy. But the first thing you've got to do is to get a bit stronger. Sib says you're too clever with your head to be strong in your body."

"Oh, I'm strong enough," said Keefe, "only for the hurt, and the little weakness it left behind it."

Summer had come round again after the long winter that had passed since the capture of Stine, and this new region in the glory of summer was a paradise never dreamed of by Keefe. For some days he did little more than sit on Granny Cronin's doorstep with the crutch by his side and an open book on his knees, never tired of watching the ceaseless vagaries of the landscape, the shadows of the high clouds flitting like living things across the plain with their trail of dissolving hues, the distant mountains changing countenance every minute, the river playing hide-and-seek with the pursuing sunshine.

"Light against dark, and dark against light," he thought; "the lesson of Nature. The glory of the sun-cloud against the portentous gloom of the mountain cavity. How shall man gather fresh ideas from the sky-windows emitting heaven's full splendour, from the exquisite latticework of gnarled trees, from dome and spire of crag and hill peak? Can he not continue to follow her suggestions as he has done in the past? Can originality have come to an end

“It Needn’t be Ugly”

III

while Nature is so eternally and so infinitely original? Yet where and whence is the genius to arise with power to seize the elusive suggestions haunting the imagination of man, and to bind them to his purpose?”

“Drink your milk, my boy, and leave off thinkin’ for a while! That little goat is the best of a creature for puttin’ the colour into a body’s face,” Mrs. Cronin would cry, half-afraid that his passive state and the dream in his eyes meant some kind of “decline” that her hospitable treatment would prove unable to cope with.

In the evening, when her active work was done, she would bring her knitting and sit beside him on the stone bench outside the door, and essay to keep the promise she had made to tell him “all about” the people and what was going on in the country.

“Things are far better than they used to be since they got the land,” she said. “They’re mendin’ up old houses and buildin’ new ones——”

“Where are they building?” asked Keefe, suddenly interested.

“A couple of miles higher up towards Loop Head,” said Mrs. Cronin. “If you would like to see them, you might get a lift on a car or a cart in that direction any day.”

Keefe felt a desire to see what kind of work these country builders were doing, and for the next few days he sat on the lower step at the gate on the road, looking for some kind of vehicle to take him a piece of the way to the place where he wanted to go.

The opportunity arrived, and he got a seat on a cart carrying material to where the builders were at

work on a group of new cottages. He sat on the stone fence on the other side of the road all day, watching and criticizing the builders, his crutch and his portfolio and drawing materials by his side.

The contractor, who was a builder from a town in the country, observed him with curiosity, and soon began to talk to him. He saw Keefe as a tourist making sketches of the scenery, and all the gregariousness and good humour of the Irishman impelled him to accept the youth on the fence as a godsend to relieve the monotony of the working day.

“How would you like to be buildin’ houses?” he asked patronizingly. “Too much trouble for the like of you, wouldn’t it be?”

“If I had to make them as ugly as they are made, it would,” said Keefe. “But not if I could get leave to make them beautiful.”

The builder laughed. “Aren’t they beautiful enough for them that has got to live in them?” he said. “Kitchen and parlour, two bedrooms, wash-house—what more? Perhaps you would like Italian balconies at the windows and a church spire among the chimneys? There was a grand fellow of an arkiteck here one day, and that’s what he seemed to have in his head.”

The contractor knocked the ashes out of his pipe on a stone, and refilled it in preparation for a spell of easy conversation, while Keefe reflected that probably this was the Irish counterpart of Sam Stonewall, only with more sense of humour, more readiness for discussion, and perhaps more open to persuasion.

“I’ve heard one like you say that the difference between a man and a snail is that the snail has a

house on his head, ready provided for him, and the man hasn’t, and that all the builder has to do is to make him even with the snail,” said Keefe.

The contractor nodded.

“Faith,” he said, taking the pipe out of his mouth and blowing away the smoke, “I think if he had been in this country he would have seen that the man sometimes had the house on his back—when the roof fell in on him!”

“All right!” said Keefe. “What is wanted is a sound place to live in. But it needn’t be ugly, need it?”

“It has to be cheap.”

“Ugliness isn’t always cheap.”

“Plainness is cheaper than fal-lals. When a man wants decorations on his shop front he pays extra. It brings him more customers, and he can afford it. What good would a lot of nonsense be to anybody in a back place like this, where there’s no shops and no customers?”

“I wasn’t thinking of shop fronts or fal-lals,” said Keefe. “I could give you a plan for a cottage that would be nice to look at, and as convenient to live in as what you’re putting up.”

“And cost a lot more.”

“No; just as cheap.”

“What do you know about it?”

“I know something about building. I learned it as my trade.”

“Where did you get the plan?”

“It’s my own invention.”

“Let’s have a look at it.”

The contractor had finished his pipe, and eagerly

scanned the drawings that Keefe took from his portfolio.

"Faith, it's an elegant little house," he said, "and a lot prettier than the snail-shell sort."

"You could floor the veranda with your Donegore flags," said Keefe.

"So we could."

"These window sashes wouldn't take more material than those your carpenter is making. You'd have no stairs, and you could afford to make this porch."

"I like it well. I take to it kindly," said the contractor. "I'll tot up the cost, and talk to you more about it."

He took it into the shed put up to serve as a little office while the building was going on, and he and an assistant put their heads together in consultation over it. The next day, returning to the spot, Keefe was met by the contractor, making friendly overtures.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said; "I'll buy the plan from you on condition you see the first cottage put up for me. I've work in another place, and if you do this it will be a convenience to me. But if the cost runs past what you say, I'll have to stop it off the price of your plan."

"All right!" said Keefe.

CHAPTER XIV

A Deserted Home

So Keefe found himself happy in having an occupation, and the prospect of receiving a little money as the price of his design for a cottage. Hope, and an outlet for his pent-up energies, proved powerful aids to the goat's milk and the care of Granny Cronin in restoring his strength, and the crutch was soon thrown away, and the disabled foot declared itself fit to take the road with its fellow.

Every day he was at his post superintending the building of his cottage, and the contractor, having assured himself that the youth knew his business in this particular matter at least, left him to carry it on, and attended to another engagement at some little distance.

Rejoicing in his new liberty, Keefe began to think of long Sunday walks in search of those wonderful abbeys and castles promised to him as "handy" to his purpose.

"What is that grey building, far over there, showing among trees?" he asked Granny Cronin. "Sometimes, when the sun is shining, it seems quite near, and at other times it gets into the clouds."

"Oh, sure that's Castle O'Dougherty" said the Granny; "a lonesome place, God help us! since the

family's all cleared out of it. Nobody in it since Sir Colman O'Dougherty died, and the last of his daughters married and livin' out foreign."

"It doesn't look exactly a castle," said Keefe; "not from here, at least."

"Oh, then it has a castle side to it when you get round to the back," said the Granny; "and the inside of the house is full of grandeur. What but you would take a walk to look at it?"

"Can I get in?" asked Keefe.

"No fear, if you say who sent you. The caretaker is a friend of mine, and the same Castle O'Dougherty was once a home to me. Wasn't I in the nursery when Miss Katreen and Miss Moya were babies?"

On a Sunday afternoon Keefe set out to visit the grey pile among the trees, leaving the highroad and making short cuts across a country of hills and hollows, grey limestone rocks and plateaux, and bosses of lush grass, vividly green; springing over pools and fording little streams, avoiding the shifting bog, climbing up and down ravines hung with garlands of brilliant foliage. When he drew near the cultivated land around the castle, a high window, catching the sun, shot a piercing glance at him, more like a warning than a welcome, and as he plunged into the shade of a little forest of aged oaks, a loud cawing of rooks seemed to announce his arrival.

Emerging into an open space of neglected lawn, he stared at a hall door which looked as if he need not expect it to open to him; but coming round to the other side of the house he found that the back was the more attractive front. Here the door was open, and near it the caretaker and his family were enjoying

themselves in the sunshine. A great garden wall, laden with ivy, lost itself in the trees to one side, and right opposite, on the green-capped cliff, rose the old castle, dark against the ocean blue.

The caretakers, who were the gardener and his wife, welcomed the visitor, and were glad to show him everything he wanted to see. They were proud of their position as old retainers of the last of the O'Doughertys, at the same time Shemus O'Hehir being ready to prove that his own family was as ancient, for the matter of that, as any in the county!

Keefe was offered tea, or milk, or anything he would take, and was tactful enough to accept the hospitality.

Shemus O'Hehir was guide to the ancient pile as well as caretaker of the more modern house, and had profited by the visits of antiquarians to the spot, in so far that he was eloquent in describing the war scenes enacted here, and accurate in pointing out and naming the peculiar features of the architecture.

The castle was a fifteenth-century building, with a "peel" tower in two sections, one narrower than the other, the door section having a spiral staircase with well-cut steps and a stone handrail, and lit all the way up by small, slit, unglazed windows.

Keefe examined this staircase with the architect's interest in all the ingenuities of its construction. Climbing by means of it to the battlements, he perceived the uses for defence of the corbelled gallery through which he looked down, conjuring up the once-terrible assaulting enemy, now existing only among ghostly armies in wars of the long-dead past.

In this section he found, on the opposite side of the

door, the guardroom, the traphole in the passage of approach, the various loopholes for espying danger, and overhead several stories of small bedrooms, mounting higher than the main rising of the castle, with a corner turret rising above the staircase.

The main wing of the castle, facing the sea, consisted of a gloomy vaulted store, with several large rooms in stories above it. The top room was roofed with shingles resting on a vaulting over the other stories.

Keefe examined all with keen interest, taking notes and making rapid sketches of a curious fireplace, of corbels, finials, window slits, and taking photographs of the castle from different points of view.

"It was a castle of the Earls of Thomond," said Shemus, "and went to the O'Doughertys by a marriage after the wars had done with it. Sir Colman's great-grandfather built the present house, and the family lived in it till sorrow driv them out of it. Many's the one comes to see the old castle. The last was two Englishmen that are goin' about analysin' all over the country and makin' drawings somethin' like your own. It isn't for everybody to be taken over the dwellin'-house, but on account of Mrs. Cronin——"

The house built by Sir Colman O'Dougherty's great-grandfather proved to be even more interesting in its own way than the ancient castle of the Earls of Thomond. Besides the antique furniture of its rooms it contained many features and relics of historic value —portraits, marbles, weapons of early periods, primitive utensils of stone and clay, treasure-trove of objects exquisitely fashioned of gold and gems. In the hall

historic documents hung on the wall, yellow parchments with writings undecipherable by ordinary eyes, belonging to the days when the Earls of Thomond stood siege in the stronghold of the peel tower on the cliff.

It seemed to Keefe, as he went from room to room looking around with something of awe, that this home must have been deserted hastily, with intention of a return not yet accomplished. Shemus O'Hehir's wife opened the door of a wardrobe showing ladies' dresses hanging as if expecting to be worn to-morrow, and in a pretty corner room, which she called Miss Katreen's boudoir, stood an easel with a half-finished portrait and a palette and sheaf of brushes on a stool beside it.

"That was Miss Moya's painting," said the caretaker. "She was a great hand at it."

"Will she never come back?" asked Keefe.

"Oh, she's always promisin' to come, but I think it's hard for her, since her husband (a grand gentleman he is) was ordered out foreign, and of course she went with him."

"Promising to come! Does she write to you?" asked Keefe, feeling a curious interest in the absent tenant of this little corner room, which had seemed redolent of a personality familiar to his imagination. Why this impression of familiarity should rush on him was unaccountable. When he tried to seize it the impression itself was as elusive as an experience in a dream—a dream that is so real for a moment, but dissolves at each effort of the waking senses to recall it.

As he tramped back across country to Mrs. Cronin's

cottage his way was lighted partly by the midsummer glow in the western heavens, partly by the white moon, which had turned to burnished silver long before he reached his destination.

While he ate his supper Granny Cronin listened with delight to his report on the old castle and the deserted home of the O'Doughertys.

"Didn't I tell you, now?" she said. "The two architeck gentlemen I had here before you would deave you with their talk about it——"

"Oh, they were the travelling architects, were they?" said Keefe. "I heard of them at the buildings and at the castle."

"Sure they were everywhere. They're gone away to walk County Galway; but they said they'd be back this way."

"O'Hehir said he didn't take them up through the house," said Keefe.

"Not strangers," said Mrs. Cronin. "He don't show the world the rooms where they all lived so proud and happy, and where poor Sir Colman died."

"There's a picture on an easel," said Keefe. "It's only half-painted, but the eyes have been looking at me in the strangest way ever since I saw it. I want to go back and look at it again."

"Sure you can, and as often as you like, dear. Oh, then, that was the face was worth lookin' at! Miss Moya was handsome enough, but Miss Katreen that was drownded was the beauty of creation. The eyes of her wouldn't be easy to put into a picture, and I didn't know Miss Moya was able to make such a good hand of it."

"A pair of remarkable eyes are there," said Keefe,

"though they seem to be looking at one through a mist. That's because the picture is not finished, I suppose. And maybe if it was more worked on they would lose that curious fascination."

"Miss Moya never had heart to finish it."

"She will come back some day, I suppose," said Keefe.

"We hope so," said Mrs. Cronin, "and everything is kept there just the way she left it. Only people do say that them that goes and stays long in terrible gay places har'ly ever wants to come back to live in a back-of-God-speed part of the world like this"

"Maybe so," said Keefe; "but there are exceptions. Everybody hasn't a Castle O'Dougherty to come back to. If I was in her place I would want to come back and finish that picture."

"Well, you're not in her place, you see. You don't be paintin' pictures, and she doesn't be buildin' houses. And myself not much but knits and thinks about the old times that do never come back. Each of us has our own share."

"It's a sad story," said Keefe.

"Now you've said the truth!" said Mrs. Cronin. "But if you're for bed at all to-night you'd better be goin'."

Keefe lay long awake, wandering in imagination through the rooms and passages of the deserted home of the O'Doughertys, and the haunting eyes of the picture on the easel in the corner room kept looking at him through a mist, like the setting moon that gleamed on him through his little window from behind an obscuring cloud-veil.

CHAPTER XV

Brothers in Art

WHEN Keefe's cottage was finished the builder paid him for his plan, and with a little money in his purse he set out to explore the ancient castles and abbeys which were not so "handy" to him at Granny Cronin's. He would go and seek his fortune a little farther in this country of ancient architecture in pathetic ruins.

One of his first long excursions was to Saint Mary's of the Fertile Rock, Corcomroe Abbey, a grey and lonely wreck, saddening with its picturesque forlornness the green valley between the naked Burren mountains.

On the ridge outside the boundaries of the Abbey a fierce battle was fought in 1817, after which the hosts of the slain, victors and vanquished, were laid to rest under the flooring of the chancel where the grass now grows thick above them.

In the chancel an Irish chieftain, King Conor O'Brien, lies in stone effigy on his tomb, with crown and sceptre, his cloak spread beneath him, his robe falling below his knees, long-pointed shoes on his feet. The tomb is set in an arched alcove in the chancel wall, above it the crude sculptured figure of a bishop in his robes with mitre and crosier, and beside it sedilia overarched with delicately carven ornament.

Keefe spent many hours studying the various features of the structure, the rich Norman character of the older chancel, the noble arches, the perfect altar swept by the winds blowing through the triple-light Gothic window behind it, the quaint heads and faces on the capitals of the chancel and chapels, and the floral and other fantastic designs on some of the others. In the chancel, where much wreckage has raised the uneven flooring by several feet, were the slabs and mounds of ancient tombs, one with the inscription: "O'Loughlin, King of Burren".

The blue sky looked down between the unroofed walls of the lower chancel, a bird flew in through the single high light above the triple Gothic window and perched on the altar. Now and again a robin twittered. The place was utterly silent and forlorn when Keefe sat down on a broken gravestone to make a drawing of the tomb of King Conor O'Brien.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a sound of feet and a murmur of voices, growing gradually louder and nearer.

"Tourists," thought Keefe, and never turned his head till he was aware that two men were standing behind him looking over his shoulder at his drawing.

"Good!" pronounced one of the men, and Keefe turned round and surveyed them.

Both these newcomers looked strong and alert; neither appeared more than thirty years of age. One was tall and thin, with keen eyes and sharp features, the other of shorter and heavier build and more stolid and passive countenance.

After a few friendly words the strangers asked to see Keefe's notebook and the contents of his portfolio,

and, having examined all, sat down on a broken gravestone opposite to him and smoked.

"You are an enterprising chap," said the heavier man. "I think we have come on your tracks before. You have been building cottages over beyond Kilsynan?"

"Oh yes!" said Keefe; and he thought, "These are the two architects."

"The plan of that cottage you gave to the builder—was it your own design?"

"Yes."

"You are young to begin life as an architect. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"'The early bird gets the worm', but don't go on too fast. We are architects ourselves, and travelling for study. What countryman are you?"

"An Irishman born in England," said Keefe.

"Irish manufacture, English brand."

"If I ever do anything of worth I will brand it Irish," said Keefe.

The stranger laughed.

"I am American myself. Every nationality is good when you get the best of it. My friend here is a mixture of English and French. Not a bad blend, I can tell you."

The tall thin man smiled out of a puff of smoke.

"I am Roberts, and he is Castellan. He has dropped a 'de' in order to be an Englishman," continued the American.

The Anglo-Frenchman knocked the ashes out of his pipe and struck into the conversation.

"I see you have seized the points of this old abbey

in your sketches," he said. "This is our second visit, and we haven't done as much as you yet. How long have you been at work?"

"Since six o'clock this morning," said Keefe.

"Where did you drop from at that hour, and are you starving?"

"I slept at Ballyvaughan," said Keefe, "and the maid of the inn gave me breakfast at half-past five a.m."

"Nothing like the 'mere Irish' for putting themselves out of their way to do you an extraordinary service," said Roberts. "I suppose you are the 'terrible nice boy' we were told was 'on the road before ye' when we ordered our car."

"I haven't seen anyone else about, nice or nasty," said Keefe, laughing. "And I suppose you are the grand English gentlemen who stayed at Mrs. Cronin's some months ago."

"Of course we are," said Roberts. "And as a proof of our magnificence we are going to produce some lunch. Here, Castellan, give up staring at the sedilia, and put off dreaming till after you have eaten. I lay a bet this youngster has made no provision against fainting from hunger before he gets back to the inn."

"I have some bread in a bag," said Keefe.

"Bread in a bag! Great Scott!" murmured Roberts, unpacking the basket carried to him by the car driver, and spreading out various attractive eatables on a tombstone.

"Jolly old place this!" he continued, as he ate. "What do you think about restoring it, eh, youngster? By the way, I suppose you have a name?"

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“Keefe Kavanagh, at your service.”

“Not bad service, from our point of view, if you were to undertake it.”

“What kind of service?”

“Oh, drawing and taking notes! But about that idea of restoring these old places?”

“I’m glad to say there’s no chance of it here,” said Keefe. “Neither money nor thought to take it up.”

“Why glad?”

“I know my Ruskin,” said Keefe, “even if I had no wits of my own.”

“An old humbug! Quite out of fashion,” said Roberts, with a twinkling glance at Castellan.

“What does he say about it?”

“He says it is ‘as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture’,” said Keefe.

“And your own wits?”

“Tell me that Truth can never be out of fashion.”

“Good!” said Roberts. “Have another sandwich.”

“He says more than that,” said Keefe, turning over his notebook. “Hear him! ‘That spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman can never be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and it is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up and commanded to direct other hands and other thoughts. . . . There was yet in the old some life, some mysterious suggestion of what it had been and of what it had lost; some sweetness in the gentle lines which rain and sun had wrought. . . . The thing is a Lie from beginning to end. . . . We have no right

whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead have still their right in them; that which they laboured for, the praise of achievement as the expression of religious feeling, or whatsoever else it might be which in those buildings they intended to be permanent, we have no right to obliterate——”

“Hold!” cried Roberts. “Have you got all the Seven Lamps burning in that little book? Glorious old Ruskin! And now, my boy, as you have no wish to ‘restore’, what is your ambition?”

“To create,” said Keefe.

“On new lines, or old?” asked Castellan.

“The future ought to hold something great as well as the past,” said Keefe. “Nature is never old. Art should remain fresh and vigorous, with renewal of original beauty, ever developing like new flowers from old seeds——”

“When you develop a new creative genius what will you create?” asked Roberts jocularly. “Have a chicken wing while you are telling us.”

“If I had the power,” said Keefe, “I would build a great cathedral in one of these wide Irish plains between the mountains, where the lamp of faith in God has burned on through all time, like the stars.”

“Have you seen the Certosa of Pavia?” asked Castellan. “No, of course you haven’t. There is a great pile of beauty and splendour in a lonely plain! You ought to see it.”

“Ah!” said Keefe, with a big sigh.

“You’re not expecting to go?” said Roberts.

“Only hoping,” said Keefe; “but as yet I do not

see the means. I'd need the leprechaun's crock of gold or the Arabian magician's carpet to carry me."

"You come from London. Did you wade the Channel—or swim?"

Keefe explained his position frankly. Bit by bit his story all came out. By the time lunch was finished, and the crumbs scattered for the birds that haunted the ruin, the two strangers were in possession of the short, uneventful history of his eighteen years. They were interested in hearing of his revolt from a life of mere brick and mortar, and his desire to give a soul to man's creations in stone. Their wonder at the scantiness of his opportunities for education and his determination in grasping them and overcoming difficulties was a surprise to Keefe. Such efforts had been as meat and drink to him; such struggles had made his life worth living.

Then another hour was spent in surveying and closely examining all the important portions of the Abbey, without and within. The faces on the capitals of the south chapel were particularly studied, so curious and archaic. Of what nationality were the carvers, and what were the types they intended to represent?

"They suggest an Eastern rather than a Western race," said Castellan. "These long eyes and curious ringlets!"

"These strange faces with their varieties of feature and expression are seen in a weird row on the beautiful romanesque door of the church of Dysert O'Dea," said Roberts. "They form a grim semicircle looking down on rich adornments of flower, foliage, and interlacings."

"I have seen them," said Keefe, "crowded together as if in penitential durance. Our ancient Irish architects seem to have had a fancy for putting imaginary human beings in such a pillory."

As all three were ready to leave the Abbey his new acquaintances invited Keefe to take a seat on their car, and dine with them at the inn at Ballyvaughan, an invitation which he gladly accepted.

"It is the neatest and prettiest little country inn I have ever stopped at," said Roberts, "and the little maid who waits is perfection."

"The whole village is as clean as if it was thoroughly scrubbed with soap and water every morning," said Castellan.

A feast of fat chickens and bacon and fresh vegetables and fruit was awaiting the travellers, and during dinner Keefe learned a good deal about his companions.

They were friends of some years' standing who had been thrown together during their architectural studies, and had agreed to make a tour of travel round a good part of the world for the purpose of extending those studies. Roberts was a man of wealth, with whom architecture was more a fad than a passion; Castellan was poorer in worldly goods, but richer in enthusiasm and in artistic and intellectual perceptions.

"We have done England and Scotland," said Roberts, "and a good part of Ireland. We have still to see Quin Friary and Kilfenora, and Ennis Abbey in Clare; and Holy Cross Abbey in Tipperary, where we shall be on the footsteps of the Gobhan Saer. Thank heaven none of these are more likely

to be 'restored' than is Corcomroe Abbey. What architecture may yet do in this country some of us may live to see—"

"I hope so," said Keefe.

"Which of us is to rival the Masters of past ages?" said Castellan.

"The man who has faith," said Keefe.

"It is not an age of faith," said Roberts.

"Faith is of all ages," said Keefe.

Castellan smiled, and Roberts said bluntly:

"Will you come with us and carry your lamp of faith and our portfolio? We want someone to do 'fag' for us on our travels—take care of our notebooks and drawings as well as his own. If you are not too proud to do any troublesome thing we may require—"

"My pride is of another kind," said Keefe gladly. "This is for me a wonderful stroke of fortune."

"You know Joseph Haydn swept the floors of Porpora the Capellmeister—"

"Just to be under the roof with him and pick up instruction," said Keefe.

"Who knows but he may have blacked his boots, if such a pair of geniuses ever heard of blacking for boots," said Roberts.

Keefe nodded. "I have blacked my own boots many a time, for the matter of that," he said. "I should do it for a regiment if I had time afterwards to study and see the world of art."

"Well, you shall have plenty of study and plenty of sightseeing, and the boots, even your own, may take care of themselves," said Roberts. "We may

as well conclude the affair at once. I am the 'boss' of the firm in matters of business, and I engage you as my secretary at a proper salary."

The sum named exceeded Keefe's wildest imaginations. Roberts was a good judge of character as well as a rich man. He knew himself to be a little indolent, and that Castellan was a dreamer—and that they wanted Keefe.

It was arranged that Keefe should return to Mrs. Cronin's cottage, to inform her of his good fortune and his plans before joining his new friends at Ennis. At the cottage he found a letter awaiting him, with a bundle of newspapers, in one of which was a paragraph marked by Sib, describing the brilliant success of the great tenor Fandango in Vienna, where he was at present delighting the musical world of that music-loving capital.

"Perhaps we shall go to Vienna," thought Keefe, as he read the paragraph eagerly before opening the letter. "Is Stine with him wherever he goes, or has he put her to school? Should I have a chance of meeting her if I were there? But they may have moved on somewhere else before I can reach that place—back to London, perhaps, or to Paris, or God knows where!"

Sib's letter was nearly altogether filled with the latest news of the Milsoms.

"Poor Mrs. Milsom and her two boys are all dead of scarlatina," she wrote. "The boys got it at school, and the mother nursed them. When one after another died the poor creature was worn out and heartbroke, and when she got it bad herself she hadn't a chance. I didn't hear a word about it till

all was over and Mattie came here in a black frock and told me.

"Mattie's all alone now, and she feels it terrible, but she's a good one to manage and take her way, and she'll light on her feet. She's keeping on the lodging-house, with the old woman that helped her mother, and, besides that, she's working hard at her own education. She has run up tall and got so handsome, you wouldn't know her. She works at type-writing, and goes to a night school, and says she intends to get her head up in the world. That piece of good luck that happened to Stine has stuck in her mind. She calls her all kinds of ungrateful names for never writing to them that were good to her. And she says she means to be as great as her—wait till you see if she don't! That's the way she talks, but I don't know how the creature is going to manage it."

Keefe grieved for Mrs. Milsom and the boys, and in writing back to Sib he sent a kind message to Mattie. He felt that he was now at a new starting-point in life, leaving behind for ever the old sadness and the lonely struggle. There was no going back into the past; but he was going round the world by a way of long travel, and one day he would meet those he had loved when the circle of that travel was complete.

CHAPTER XVI

Mattie

MRS. MILSOM's venture in opening a lodging-house for working men in a respectable street of the East End of London had prospered.

At the time of her death it was in good working order, and doing a fairly profitable business. With the help of a strong, elderly servant she had made her clients comfortable, and her house had gained a good reputation.

Mattie had been released from household duties, and allowed to follow her own desires by attending an excellent night school. As she earned a fair weekly wage by typewriting in a business office, she was able to defray the expense of her own improved education; and the mother's pride was easily credulous when her clever daughter assured her that she would yet push her way to a distinguished position in the world.

"Do it honest, Mattie!" her mother would say. "Climb where you like, but be sure you do it honest."

"Why shouldn't I be honest?" said the girl indignantly.

"Why, indeed? for you were brought up to it," said Mrs. Milsom. "But if you're too much bent on a thing there's a temptation in it."

Mattie tossed her head and shook her fair curls, and looked in the glass. She was making a pretty blouse for herself, and she saw that it was very becoming. She did not know exactly in what way she intended to conquer the world, but it must be done.

When death snatched the good mother away from her, she was stricken with grief, and stood staring at her misfortune like a frightened child in the dark. But it was not in her nature to be very long cast down. Her intense belief in her own powers came to the rescue, and her ingenious wits were soon at work on the problem of how best to provide for herself.

Old Rebecca, her mother's servant, offered her a small sum for the goodwill of the lodging-house.

"I know the business," said the old woman, "and you were always too good for it. Better for you to get into a school. You'll get on to be a teacher. You're only sixteen yet, though you look such a sight older."

"I feel a lot older," said Mattie, "and I'm not going to give up everything for you. I'll go on as I'm doing, and so can you, if you like. We'll manage together, and go shares with the profits. But if you don't like it I'll get somebody else who will work with me."

Old Rebecca had no intention of giving up her hold on the business, but relieved her feelings by going to have a talk with Sib Stonewall and telling her opinion of Mattie.

"She's as cunning as a cat, and as hard as flint," said the old woman.

"That's a cruel judgment," said Sib,

"I don't mean that she hasn't a bit of heart in her somewhere," said old Rebecca, "for she cried a bucketful when her mother was lyin' dead. And the little brothers was fond of her. But herself's everything to her; and now that there's nobody to hold her back, there's no sayin' what she will stop at."

"She's a handsome girl, and has a way with her," said Sib. "Many a woman of twenty isn't able to talk like her."

"Oh, she's all that!" said Rebecca. "And I hope she'll manage to make a lady of herself, for it's what she wants. She'll never settle down to put her life into a lodgings-house."

"Well," said Sib, "when she makes a lady of herself she'll give up the house to you. Meantime, do you keep a kind of eye to her; for, after all, sixteen's not much more than a child, though she looks like a grown-up young woman."

"I'll do the best I can for her, true," said Rebecca, "but it's hard enough to stand her airs. A body would wonder where she came from."

"And there was Stine, now, that might have come from anywhere, and was humble and simple——"

"Are you sure it wasn't Mattie was picked out of the water?" said Rebecca. "I said as much to her the other day, and she looked struck, as if I had thrown something at her."

"'If it was you that was in the sea,' I said, 'we might think, maybe, you were a daughter of some nobleman, or maybe a prince. But as things is the other way about, and you're nothin' but the child of poor old Milsom——'"

"He's living still," said Sib, willing to change the

conversation. She had a liking for Mattie, and a sort of admiration for her courage and impudence, though her character often puzzled her.

"I suppose he is, but not much more than that," said Rebecca. "Mattie doesn't talk about him. Poor Mrs. Milsom used to go to see him, though he didn't know her. Why wouldn't Mattie go to see her father, if he is her father, and she isn't the daughter of some duke or other that was drowned?"

"She goes, sometimes," said Sib.

"Maybe so," said Rebecca, "but she doesn't tell me."

An hour or two later Mattie let herself into her lodging-house with her latchkey, and, proceeding up to her own room, took off her hat and shook up her crop of fair curls. Her white blouse and coat and skirt of dark-green cloth were as neat as could be. Her well-shaped feet were nicely shod. She had pretty hands, and the cheap gloves she pulled off fitted her perfectly.

She removed all these items of her attire and got into a very old dressing-gown, much mended, which had been often washed and, though bearing the marks of poverty, was highly creditable as evidence of thrift. The clothes she had taken off were carefully put away under a curtain or in a drawer. The room which she had taken as her own was as neat as her person. She told herself that it was quite a lady's room. Altogether, Mattie and her surroundings were worthy of her ambition to make herself a lady; and so was the girl's manner to old Rebecca when she brought in the tea.

Despite her complaints to Sib, the old woman of



sixty had been completely taken into leading strings by the girl of sixteen.

"She's not natural," growled Rebecca, when Mattie paid her her wages and showed her how accurately she had kept the accounts of the expenses and profits of the house. But she acknowledged that things were going on quite as well as when Mrs. Milsom was at the head of affairs. And, besides, Rebecca was practically her own mistress all day long, for Mattie was indefatigable at both her typewriting and her schooling. The wonder was how she contrived to keep control of the affairs of the lodging-house besides.

This she did by working early and late. She had a midday meal at her office, and Rebecca had only to provide her with breakfast and tea. After supper a report of the day's proceedings was laid before her, accounts were kept, and arrangements for the next day decided on. Old Rebecca grew more submissive and more astonished as the time went on; now grumbling at the girl's audacity, and now lost in admiration of her cleverness.

"I don't know where you come from," she would say, when Mattie was particularly "grand" and patronizing. "Your mother and me worked together, and what was good for me to do was good enough for her to do. And she never took on the mighty fine lady over me. Many a time I think you're not her daughter at all, and that it was the little one that was took away was your mother's and father's child."

"You are a foolish old woman," said Mattie. "Why would my mother send away her own child

with a stranger and keep nobody's daughter at home with her?"

"Oh, why," said Rebecca, "except to put good fortune in the way of her own?"

In saying such things Rebecca had no meaning beyond the impulse to take a kind of small revenge on Mattie for her imperious pride and her irritating vanity. But the words she spoke on these occasions stung the girl in a way the old woman could never have imagined. Her old disgust at the contrast between her own lot in life and that of Stine was roused again and stimulated. If her mother had sent her away with the rich stranger, and kept Stine, what a prosperous life would have been hers!

She knew the truth of her own birth and Stine's unknown origin, and yet Rebecca's fantastic suggestions excited her imagination. What if a mistake could have been made, and she was really Stine, and Stine ought to have been Mattie? Such fancies did not seem to belong to the practical managing brain of the young mistress of the lodging-house, but they came and went as dreams come and go between sleeping and waking, vanishing totally with the return of the sunshine and the practical business of life.

Sib invited the girl to tea with her sometimes when Sam was at his club, and Mattie felt no difficulty about travelling to and fro in the bus, though the distance between her own street and New Brick Street was considerable. She was always glad to come, and enjoyed dazzling Sib with her prosperity and her aspirations.

"Oh, I can go anywhere alone!" she said. "Everybody pays me respect. The young men in the office

pull off their caps if they meet me going in and out of the door. I heard one of them whispering one day that Miss Milsom was a well-born young lady who had come down in the world."

"And did you feel any the better for that?" asked Sib, as she helped her to the good things provided for a plentiful tea.

"Of course I liked it," said Mattie. "It made me feel like what I ought to be. Now, isn't my dress nice, and not a bit common or vulgar?"

"It's real nice and becoming," said Sib.

"My hands are getting quite soft," said Mattie. "I put milk on them to make them white."

"I wouldn't like to put milk on my hands for vanity when so many children haven't got it to drink," said Sib.

"Oh, it's only a little spared from my tea!" said Mattie. "It would make no difference to the children. And I wear gloves at night."

"I wouldn't be bothered," said Sib, looking at her own hands, red and hardened with years of honest work.

"It would be no use," said Mattie. "You're different from me, Mrs. Stonewall."

"And always was," said Sib, with a little touch of disgust that for a moment checked her admiration of Mattie's better qualities and even of her audacity. "I was brought up to believe that handsome is that handsome does."

"I wonder what Stine is doing now, and how she looks, and if she's more of a lady than I am," said Mattie.

"I don't know anything about her," said Sib.

"She forgot us all. Keefe nearly broke his heart about it, but I hope he's forgetting her now. He's going off to travel the world with two grand gentlemen architects, and to learn the business thorough, and he'll be as grand as Fandango himself one of these days, see if he don't!"

"Becky is always saying that maybe I was Stine and Stine was me," said Mattie.

"Rubbish!" said Sib emphatically.

"Why?" said Mattie. "There's plenty of it in the penny novels. People so often turn out to be somebody else."

"Do you want to deny your own father and mother," said Sib, "even if you could?"

"I always believed they were my father and mother," said Mattie, "and I must still, of course, unless something is found out. One of us was found in the water, and Becky says she might turn out to be a princess."

"Becky wants to make a fool of you for your impudence," said Sib.

"She says Mother might send away her own child to let her have the good fortune——"

"And that you are the princess, as might happen to be in some of them nonsensical novels."

Mattie nodded.

"For one thing, my dear, you are two years older than Stine. There's a bit of an awkwardness in dates, Miss Mattie Milsom."

"Oh, that could be got over!" said Mattie. "Who's to tell? Mother's gone, and Father will never tell anything any more. He always raved about a secret. Keefe's gone round the world——"

Mattie was running on, for the mere pleasure of seeing the consternation of honest-minded Sib. The girl did not believe a word of what she was saying. Sib's lengthening face as she wove her romance of possibilities amused her, till at last Sib told her that it was time for her to start for home.

"And I don't want you here again till you've learned some sense," said Mrs. Stonewall.

Mattie drew on her neat gloves, and burst out laughing.

"I'm not as great a fool as you and Becky think," she said, going out of the door.

"I'm glad to hear it, and I hope you'll stick to it," said Sib.

"It's by education I mean to get up in the world," said Mattie. "I'm only sixteen, and I've time before me. What do I care about Stine, or whether she's me or not! I'm clever enough and good-looking enough to make a way for myself."

"That's right," said Sib, "only don't let your vanity run you into a hole."

Mattie had no intention of quarrelling with anyone who was kind to her; but she reflected as she went down the street that though Mrs. Stonewall was a very good creature she was, after all, a common sort of person, which was due, of course, to her humble birth and inferior education.

CHAPTER XVII

The Pearl Necklace

THREE years had passed since Mrs. Milsom's death, five years since the capture of Stine. Mattie was nineteen, and she had made the most of her time in the matters of education and thrift since the day when Fandango's generosity had lifted her family out of miserable poverty into comparative comfort. She had got a pretty good plain English education, and a fair knowledge of French, and she was making persevering efforts in the study of German and Italian. Her highest ambition was to obtain a position as private secretary to a lady somewhere abroad, but she thought that as a first step she might undertake to teach English to little children in a French or Belgian school.

With these views in mind she studied the advertisements in the papers, and made enquiries at bureaux for persons in search of employment. She was satisfied that the time had come when she might venture to make a start, but was withheld by a natural feeling (favouring old Rebecca's belief that she had a bit of heart in her somewhere), an unwillingness to leave London for ever, so long as her poor old father was there alive.

She did not confess this natural feeling either to

Sib or to Rebecca, neither did she quite understand it herself. So long as she could recollect, her father had been nothing to her but a semi-imbecile old man in a bed in a home for incurables, whom she saw very seldom and scarcely realized as having anything to do with her existence. She had played with the idea suggested by old Rebecca that he might not be her father after all, though that was only to amuse herself by shocking Sib. Yet the actual existence of that poor old man, who did not know her when she went to visit him, had force to restrain her from pursuing her desires.

The crisis that was sure to come arrived one day, when she received a message at her office that her father was dead in the home. The girl suffered as great a shock as if she had never expected the inevitable to happen, and though what she felt was not actually grief, yet she was affected by a painful, and to herself unaccountable, sense of forlornness.

Putting on a black frock she hastened to the home, and was received by a nurse who had always been kind and sympathetic with the poor old patient. She was not in time to see him; his bed was folded up, his little cubicle was vacant.

“Don’t cry, my dear,” said the nurse. “Things had to be done in a hurry, as is often the case, but I have saved a few little things for you that I thought you might like to keep. There isn’t much, but he had his fancies. I thought you might want to have his old coat, that he held to as if it was a friend he couldn’t part with. And there’s his old silver watch that didn’t go these years back. And his pipe and

his tobacco pouch that he kept in the pocket of the coat."

Mattie looked at the poor objects placed before her with a feeling of shrinking disgust which she was ashamed that the nurse should perceive. If she had loved her father the things would have been precious to her; but as she had not loved and hardly even known him, they were only sordid remnants, which she would gladly have been saved from the annoyance of seeing or touching.

She had to accept them with thanks, however, and to take them home. This she did one evening, arriving in the dusk and taking her parcel to her own room without notice from Rebecca. Next day she showed the more trifling articles to the old woman, but, reserving the coat, she said to herself that she would take it out and give it to some destitute person, who might be glad of it to keep off the cold. She certainly could not carry it about the world with her, and now there was no longer any link to hold her to London.

She felt unwilling to part with the old garment without thoroughly examining the pockets and every part of it, and on a certain business holiday she resolved to devote one of her free hours to this disagreeable task. She was accustomed to spend much of such spare time on the arrangement of her drawers and cupboards and the repairs of her simple wardrobe, and on this occasion, when the usual duties had been attended to, she reluctantly drew forth the poor old coat from its hiding place and spread it out on her knees. It was made of rough grey cloth, well lined, and with several pockets; still in sound con-

dition, though shabby in appearance, rather from the passing of time than from actual wear and tear. She turned the pockets inside out. All smelt strongly of tobacco, as was not surprising, seeing that it had been made a receptacle for tobacco and pipe in the days when the incurable invalid had been able to enjoy a smoke and was permitted the luxury.

Having examined all the pockets, it seemed to her that there was still another in an unusual place just under the arm, long and narrow, and lost in the folds of the lining. As she could find no opening she supposed that the lumpiness attracting her notice was caused by a rucking up and hardening of the interlining, which had helped to make the old coat so comfortable as to remain precious in the eyes of its owner long after he had become unable to wear it.

But no. Fingering it carefully, Mattie assured herself that something was stowed away cunningly and sewn up strongly between the linings and the cloth under the armhole of the coat. Her curiosity was roused, and instead of putting it away, as a thing done with and to be got rid of, she began to rip it up with her scissors, beginning with the armhole and working down through strong sewings, taking heed not to injure the thing, whatever it might be, that was so carefully hidden and protected.

As she snipped and clipped, finding it difficult to pull threads of locked stitches and to feel her way with the points of her scissors, she began to think that there had been some reason for the old man's attachment to this garment beyond its mere convenience as a receptacle for his pipe and tobacco.

At last she was rewarded for her patient search, and

the thing that she knew must be bedded in the linings of the coat was released.

It proved to be a softly folded parcel of silver paper, arranged so as to work into the folds of cloth and linings. Mattie drew it forth and opened it with eager fingers.

Then there was a startling revelation. Something, coming bit by bit out of its wrappings, shone with a soft lambent whiteness as it caught the daylight. Here was a necklace of small exquisite pearls, many strings wound together and finished delicately by a chased and curious clasp of gold.

Mattie sat amazed. Scarcely believing her eyes, she held up the beautiful thing to the light, and for some minutes thought of nothing but admiring its perfection. She had never seen, let alone touched, anything of its kind before. At last she let it drop into its wrappings in her lap, and began to ask herself where it came from.

“Someone must have given it to him,” she thought, “and now it belongs to me. I wonder how much it is worth in money. It can’t be much, I am afraid, or he would have given it to Mother to sell. Mock jewellery is not valuable. I wonder if it is real or mock.”

She rose up and tried on the necklace, clasping it round her neck, and there it hung with its white glow, making a lustrous circle where her white blouse left bare the young fair skin of her pretty throat. For some time she stood before her looking-glass, wondering at the beauty of the necklace, turning from side to side to observe the effect from every point of view, and delighting in this new possession which there

was no one to dispute with her. Her joy and pride in it almost impelled her to cry out to Rebecca to come and share her astonishment and sympathize with her triumph. Something of her habitual caution restrained her, however, and she sat down again to think the matter over.

As she did so she picked up the wrappings of soft paper that had protected the pearls, and in spreading them out to receive the necklace again her eye was caught by a piece of paper thicker than the others, on which there was writing.

She paused first with a shock, and then drew the paper forth slowly, with a misgiving that here was something that was going to dispute her right to her new piece of property. Perhaps it was willed to another person. Her imagination snatched in a confused manner at the possibilities of such a case. All her family were gone. If it had been willed to her mother, did it not fall to her, as the only living child of her mother now?

For half a minute she sat staring at the lines of crude writing on the paper before attempting to decipher them. Joss Milsom's education had been only rudimentary, but he could write so as to make his meaning understood, and his name was here signed to a distinct statement.

Reluctantly Mattie applied herself to the reading of a rather difficult document, her unwillingness increasing and amounting to anger and disgust as she went on, which she did with the growing conviction that the pearls were not for her, and that they were valuable.

She had read the statement many times before she

admitted to herself the fact that the necklace, whether valuable or not, belonged to Stine, and that, considering the circumstances, the pearls were probably worth a great price—of a value, indeed, far beyond her own inexperience to estimate.

She wept wildly in the bitterness of her disappointment. Stine to be always the winner! Stine, who had already got all the good fortune, and had gone away and forgotten those who had fostered her! She who was now enjoying everything the world could give her, to reach back and seize this property that Mattie had for a moment looked on as her own—it was too cruel! Mattie threw the necklace aside and read the paper once again, though without hope of drawing any meaning from it beyond what was plainly set forth:

“This necklace was round the neck of the baby I saved out of the water at the wreck of the steamer *Bolivar*, on its way home from South America. I took her home to my wife, and we kept her. She and myself were the only souls saved. She is our own child now, but when she is grown up I will give her this necklace that belongs to her, because I think there is value in it. I am keeping it hid safe for fear others would be tempted to take it and sell it, as we are so poor. If I die before she is grown up it will be found in my old coat with this statement.

“Signed, Joss MILSOM, Seaman.”

There was no getting over it. The necklace belonged to Stine, and it was now Mattie’s duty to take care of it for her and find her and give it to her. She restored it to its wrappings and locked it up in a drawer. Then her ingenious mind began to work

upon many questions. How was she to find Stine, and, if found, would Stine be generous enough to reward her for her honesty? For the longer she thought of the matter the more evident it became to her that if she burned the bit of writing and sold the necklace no one would ever know anything about it but herself.

She looked this easy act of dishonesty in the face and turned from it with cold disdain. She might suffer from a passion of jealousy and disappointment, but she had a conscience. The eye of God was upon her and she would do no wicked thing in His sight. Stine should have her pearls when Mattie could find her. Meanwhile they should be kept safe.

CHAPTER XVIII

Temptation

THOUGH Mattie had made up her mind to take care of Stine's property, and to restore it to her when occasion offered, yet she did not admit to herself that she was in any way bound to seek for such an occasion. Stine had cut herself off from her old friends, and having left them in ignorance of everything concerning her, of her whereabouts in the world, her present condition, and even her continuance in mortal existence, it was not to be expected that Mattie should make any extraordinary efforts to find her. Even if her companion in childhood could be discovered by means of advertisements pursuing her all over the world, Mattie could not afford to pay the cost of such an undertaking. She would, however, be faithful in preserving the necklace, and her first step was to buy a cedarwood box, in which she locked it up, wrapped in cottonwool, and overwrapped with silver paper.

The box was deposited in a drawer, which was also kept locked, and to no one—not even to Sib Stonewall or old Rebecca—was the secret of its existence confided.

Its mere presence in her room, in that drawer, in that box, had made an indescribable difference to

Mattie. She felt it there, always, as an evidence of two interesting facts concerning herself, her own trustworthiness and the importance that would be hers in some future day when she might heap coals of fire on the head of ungrateful Stine by handing her this unexpected windfall. It was there, it was not hers, and yet it was hers. She could do what she liked with it, and she preferred to do nothing but hold it in safe keeping for its owner. She was not even aware of its value. It was probably worth a good deal of money: better that she should not know how much. For some time she did not want to know, but at last curiosity seized her.

She felt that there would be a difficulty about getting it valued by an expert. She might be questioned as to how it came into her possession, and she did not want to have to enter into explanations. The secret was her own, and she was determined not to share it with anyone. Might not the law step in and take the pearls into its hands, discover the owner at once, and deprive her, Mattie, of the honour and glory of presenting the necklace to Stine?

For some time these doubts and fears restrained her; but there came a moment when she told herself that she ought to know the value of this property which she had resolved to keep possession of and hold in trust. So one day she set out to walk to the establishment of a first-class jeweller, holding the cedar-wood box containing the necklace tightly with both hands under her boa. She would not venture to travel in a tramcar or train lest she should be robbed, and arrived safely with her box at the jeweller's counter.

“I wish to know the exact value of something I

have got here," said Mattie. "A friend of mine has received it as a legacy, and she is not able to come to you herself."

The jeweller watched her while she unlocked the box, unfolded the papers, and removed the wrappings from the treasure it contained. When the necklace was drawn forth he stared at it, and then looked keenly at the girl.

"This is indeed valuable," he said. "These pearls are worth a great deal of money. Has the owner no idea of the extent of her good fortune?"

"No," said Mattie. "I am to learn all about it for her."

"I cannot tell you the exact sum at the moment," said the jeweller, "but these jewels are worth at least ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand pounds!" said Mattie, and for a second she felt dizzy. She had thought of a few hundreds as a possible sum, sufficiently enormous. But her natural cunning came to her aid. She felt that the jeweller was watching her, and she must not appear too much elated or too ignorant.

"Are you sure that is the full value of the necklace?" she said. "Are the pearls not worth a great deal more?"

"Not much more, I think," said the man; "but I can have this exactly valued for you. You can leave them with me, or if you choose to make an appointment and bring them back I can have an expert here to meet you."

"Very well," said Mattie; "I will bring them back. I do not think the owner would wish me to leave them."

She felt that the jeweller was watching her narrowly, and wished that she was out of the place. Was he thinking that she had stolen the necklace? Not every day did a girl like her in a plain black dress walk London with ten thousand pounds behind her boa.

"I will come back to-morrow at one o'clock," she said, locking up the pearls and grasping the box again with both her hands.

"Be very careful," said the jeweller, observing her suppressed excitement. "I would seriously advise your friend to employ the services of a detective in carrying the pearls about the streets."

"Oh, it will be all right!" said Mattie nervously, and hurriedly escaped from the shop. The jeweller followed her to the door, and stood looking after her till she was out of sight. Ought he to have allowed her to leave the place without learning more of how she came to be in possession of the pearls? He believed that she had no intention of returning, and in this he was right. All Mattie's ideas as she hurried home hovered round the fact that she was the keeper of ten thousand pounds, and that the law might call her to account for and deprive her of the property.

As soon as the necklace was safely locked up in her drawer she set to work to think the matter over once again.

First of all, her curiosity had been gratified. She knew the value of the gems, and it was far beyond anything her imagination had suggested. It was a fortune in a nutshell, and now the question arose again as a big temptation—did that fortune really belong to Stine, or could it by any kind of honest reasoning be successfully claimed by herself? She

could take it to some foreign city and turn it into money. And with a fortune of ten thousand pounds, what a future she could see before her!

Her face flushed, and her head began to burn as she went on thinking. Her poor mother's voice sang in her ears, and the returning words came like the strokes of a bell: "Do it honest, Mattie! Climb, if you can, but let it be done honest!" and her answer to her mother also came back to her: "Why wouldn't I be honest?" Why, indeed? she asked herself now. She had no intention of being dishonest.

Fortified by this reflection on her own virtue, she took old Milsom's written statement out of its secret hiding place and re-examined it carefully, fascinated by a vague, illusory possibility that in it she might find some failure of intention with regard to Stine, some meaning that might ultimately prove to concern herself with beneficent result.

The only point in the statement which she noted now, having overlooked it before, was the absence of all mention of the name by which the child saved from drowning had been known among her friends. The writing did not say: "We called the child Stine, our own child being Mattie". It merely said: "I took her home to my wife, and we kept her. She is our own child now."

Dwelling on these words, Mattie said to herself: "If old Rebecca saw this she would laugh, and say she always suspected that I was Stine and that Stine was me. But that would be all nonsense. I know that I am the child of my father and mother, and that my name is Milsom. If Stine were dead I might claim the pearls as having been found in the old coat

that my father left me. And she may be dead for all I can ever know to the contrary."

Not being able to arrive at any further conclusion, and remaining assured that the necklace and its value belonged to Stine, she tried to forget that those pearls were in that box, in that drawer, and to go on with her plodding work, renewing her determination to push her way honestly in the world by her own efforts. But it would not do. The pearls were there. They were silently offering her a fortune if she had courage to take possession of it. At her daily work, in her bed at night, she was pursued by the idea that she might keep this property for herself without the knowledge of anyone. Nobody in the world could ever imagine the circumstances of this case. If she were to meet Stine to-morrow, Stine could never know that she had been robbed unless Mattie were to confess to her.

"And if I do this thing," said Mattie to herself, "I will never confess it. If I made up my mind that I have a right to do it, I will never make a thief of myself afterwards."

The passion to possess a fortune, to go out into the world as a lady well dowered, to enjoy the pleasures that money can buy, to make the friends that are easily made by the rich, so wrought in her that she began to have broken sleep, with restless dreams, to lose her appetite, and to feel a repugnance to her work. Her employer said to her:

"You are not well, Miss Milsom. You have been too long without a holiday. You ought to take one."

"If I do, it will be a long one," Mattie said to herself, with a dazed feeling that she was going to sell

the pearls and travel about the world with the money. She went to bed that night with the intention of ending her struggle next day by yielding to the temptation. But in the night she had a curious dream—or was it a vision?

Her mother came into the room and went straight to the drawer, opened it, took out the box with the pearls and carried it away with her out of the room. As she passed the bed she said to Mattie:

“I am taking away your temptation. I will save you from this crime.”

Mattie wakened with the shock, buried her face in her pillow, and wept till morning. When she got up and went to the drawer she almost expected to find that the box with the pearls was gone. But it was there undisturbed. Yet her mother’s visit of warning remained with the girl as a reality. She knelt and prayed as she had never prayed before. God had delivered her from the temptation, and she asked Him now that it might never return to her.

Before the discovery of the pearls Mattie had taken steps towards gaining some kind of situation in a foreign country. Her name was on a list at a certain bureau as a person fit to take up a position as secretary to a French, Italian, or Spanish lady, or to teach English to children. She now turned her face resolutely from the drawer that held the pearls, and as soon as she could get leave of absence from her office went straight to the bureau, where she renewed her application for employment.

After a short interval of waiting she received several answers. One was from a lady in London wanting a useful companion; another, living abroad, required

a teacher of English for her children; and a third stated that an English lady in Paris wished to engage a young person as amanuensis and secretary. The last-mentioned proposal was the most attractive to Mattie, and she thought she could venture to accept it. The solicitor in whose office she had worked was willing to give her an excellent testimonial, and to answer all desirable enquiries.

So Mattie wrote, offering her services as amanuensis and secretary to the English lady in Paris, and received in return several letters of instruction and strict enquiry, written from the Champs Élysées and signed "E. Petworth".

"I am not making this engagement for myself," wrote the lady, "but for Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, who is now in Vienna, and is coming to reside in Paris. I shall be glad if you will come here as soon as is convenient to you, and stay with me till the arrival of Lady Fitzpatrick."

Thus were all Mattie's thoughts and expectations turned in a new direction. Her love of dress and her natural good taste worked together while she expended nearly all her savings in providing such articles of clothing and toilette as would, she thought, "make her presentable" in the fashionable society of Paris.

Before leaving London for her new adventure in life, Mattie arranged all her affairs with her usual prudence. She placed the business of the lodging-house altogether in the hands of old Rebecca, and paid a farewell visit to Sib Stonewall, who was more than ever filled with admiration at the courage and energy of this clever daughter of the humble Milsoms.

Mattie drew a brilliant picture of the probably splendid life into which she was to be launched.

"Mrs. Petworth is evidently a distinguished English lady," she said, "and Lord Patrick Fitzpatrick is a great personage belonging to the English embassy in Paris."

"Do you think you will be fit for the position you are taking up?" asked Sib. "Are you able to write letters for the lady in every kind of language?"

"Oh, not every!" said Mattie; "but I think I know enough of all that will be wanted. And I am not exactly stupid, Mrs. Stonewall. I shall be learning all the way as I go along."

"That you will, I'll lay a bet. There isn't a stupid bone in your body or hair on your head!" cried Sib heartily. "I hope you'll remember to write to me in English, for Latin or Greek would be very little use to me. And the postman mightn't be able to read even French or German, and might happen to leave the letter at the wrong door."

"Never fear," said Mattie, reflecting that perhaps she might not think it wise to correspond with so humble a person as Mrs. Stonewall. She knew of no one else to whom she could write letters from Paris except old Rebecca, and she intended to bid goodbye to her and the lodging-house for ever. She would like to keep a little hold on Sib, who had been so kind to her. Time would throw light on a number of impossibilities and possibilities.

"And, who knows, maybe you will meet with Stine on your travels," said Sib. "You are going to be a fine lady now yourself, and can be even with her."

Mattie frowned.

"Oh, you needn't look so cross!" said Sib. "It isn't good to be unforgiving."

"No," said Mattie, banishing the frown.

"And there's Keefe, on the tramp too. You'll very likely run up against him before all's over."

"Of course there's no knowing," said Mattie. "But the world is a big place, Mrs. Stonewall."

"It must be pretty big if there's many Londons in it," said Sib.

"Plenty of great cities," said Mattie, "and room enough for more."

"Well, I'll never see it," said Sib, "and one like London's enough for me. I'd rather have the fields and the hills, if God had given me my choice. But He plants us down where He likes, and we have to stay there."

"I like streets, and theatres, and gay crowded places," said Mattie.

"God take care of you, child, and don't get too fond of them," said Sib. "You don't know how long you'll be with the people you're going to, or what you'll meet with in the big cities afterwards. And if ever you feel yourself in danger, just put your foot on the boat and come back to me."

Mattie laughed. "You've the best heart in all the world, Mrs. Stonewall," she said. "But I'm not a coward."

CHAPTER XIX

A Word from Stine

MRS. EMILIA PETWORTH was busy with her morning letters in her particular sanctum in her *appartement* in the Champs Élysées, a small room described as her boudoir, but used by her as a study, a library, and, especially, a peaceful retreat. Though living in Paris she kept her English ways, rose and break-fasted early, and occupied herself usefully all the early hours of the day. She was in close touch with many good works in Paris, especially with those giving help and protection to poor and friendless girls.

She kept up an extensive correspondence with friends and fellow-workers. On her desk now was a letter from a Mother Abbess, head of a training school outside Paris; another was from a girl who with her help had obtained a position as teacher of English in Russia; a third was from a French teacher in Italy. All these had been read when she took up yet another letter, bearing a Spanish post-mark.

“Ah, this is Stine at last!” she said, smiling as she tore the envelope open. “What has she to say for herself?”

“DEAREST MRS. PETWORTH (so ran the letter),

“You will have wondered at my long silence. Your last letter told me that you noticed with surprise how completely Señor Fandango’s name had dropped out of the musical announcements, and as I did not write to you, you seemed to have lost us.

“It is true that there is a great change. Uncle got a sudden illness in Constantinople, and when he recovered his voice was gone. He will never be able to sing again. He would not allow me to tell you of his misfortune till he was quite sure it would be permanent. He frets and pines, and his general health is low.

“We are now rather poor. Dear Uncle spent his money so royally as he went along that too little remains. He decided to live in obscurity in his own country. ‘Fandango’, you know, was an assumed name for the opera bills. He had quarrelled with his people, and they had lost sight of him. Now he keeps the public name as a shelter for him in his downfall.

“I am able in my own way to repay him by fidelity and loving care for all his generosity to me. Earlier friends forgot me. I can now be a real daughter to him.”

Mrs. Petworth dropped the open letter, and took off her spectacles. Though good and high-minded she was not without a touch of that refinement of worldliness which would claim and grasp the best dower this world can give for those whom her highest instincts and judgment approved as worthy of the prizes that ought to be awarded to the fittest. In the first shock of surprise she rebelled, more with her heart than her will, against the reverse that had befallen this girl, so fit in the very dawn of her womanhood.

She had been attracted to Stine on that first evening at the hotel in London, when a gaily dressed little figure had sat beside her on a sofa, looking at her with sad eyes, evidently overwhelmed by some grief which she must not confess, and of which she would not complain.

Later, in Paris, Stine had been thrown on her sympathies for advice and help in the matter of education, and for all the motherly kindness that Emilia Petworth was ready to give. She had grown to love the girl, to bestow on her a large share of her thoughts, and to expect a better fate for her than that of passing through life merely as the petted daughter of a man whose years were spent and whose companions were found chiefly on the concert platform or the stage of the opera.

“And he is not her uncle,” reflected Mrs. Petworth. “She told me as much as that before he had warned her to be silent as to her antecedents. Whatever may have been her origin, whatever kind of people the friends may have been from whom he parted her, she bears in herself the evidence of a higher class, a finer breeding, and a more delicate natural taste than one could ever associate with her kindly and generous and rather erratic self-constituted guardian.”

She returned to the letter.

“I can now be a real daughter to him.” It was indeed a happy feature of the whole thing. The noblest part of the girl’s nature was in this fully brought to light. And yet—Stine buried in a dark place with this disappointed man, who, at his best, was not a satisfactory companion for her!

Mrs. Petworth sighed, and picked up the letter, which after all she had not read to the end.

"You must not think," continued Stine, "that I am sad like poor uncle. This enchanting old city affects me in a way I cannot describe to you. It is, you know, the ancient capital of Spain, of a mysterious antiquity. I hear strange tales of its origin. When God made the sun He placed it over Toledo! Who made the city before God made the sun is not in the story. At all events, ever since I first crossed the majestic Puerte de Alcantara, and climbed the narrow stair-like streets among the rocks looking aloft to their crown of palaces and towers in the blue, I seem to have lived in an atmosphere of unimaginable splendour laden with a sweet odour of decay, like the glory of the autumn woods when winter's breath is upon them.

"I send you a few little sketches of my surroundings which will amuse you. I cannot make the colour rich enough, but my drawing is my delight, and is a joy even to poor old Uncle."

Mrs. Petworth turned to the sketches.

"Happy girl!" she said. "She has the sources of contentment within herself. And this enchanting Toledo! I have been in Spain, but never in the ancient capital. Shall I one day go to visit her there, or will she leave it and come here before I have time to make my arrangements for such a trip?"

With a little sigh, half of satisfaction, half of regret, Mrs. Petworth turned to her watch, and remembered an engagement.

"I must not forget that I have to meet the English girl at the terminus," she said. "That would be a

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misfortune for Miss Mathilde Milsom, who does not know Paris, and will expect to see me waiting for her. To neglect one girl while sentimentalizing over another would not be admirable conduct."

She put away Stine's letter and sketches, locking them up in her bureau, ordered her motor car, and was soon on her way to the Gare St. Lazare.

CHAPTER XX

A Foot on the Ladder

No one seeing Mattie's placid and dignified demeanour, as she sat beside the distinguished old lady in the motor car and was swept across Paris through the brilliant afternoon sunshine, could have imagined her state of excitement at the moment.

Sordid surroundings and humble, if not vulgar, associates were left behind. She knew by instinct that Mrs. Petworth had been favourably impressed by her manners and appearance, and she felt that she had within herself a reserve of the power to please. She believed with triumph, not only that she might easily be taken for a lady, but that she was already quite the equal of any lady she might meet. The degree of her self-esteem was so great that it might have betrayed her hopes, only that its quality was concealed by her prudence, and a vigilant restraint gave it the air of the aplomb of good breeding. Observant and imitative, she was ready to profit from the first moment by the advantage of coming into touch with the refinement of a woman like Mrs. Petworth. Even the accent of the old lady's English was caught by her like the keynote of a tune.

She was right in thinking that Mrs. Petworth was

pleased with her, having been rather uncertain as to the kind of young person she was bringing over from London to present to her friend. When Mattie sat opposite to her at dinner, in a simple yet dainty frock, she decided that the girl was very passable, and would not be found objectionable in any company to which she might be introduced. The brown wood of the charming *salle à manger* was very becoming as a background to a cloud of fair hair, and the delicate light from the wax candles in tall silver candlesticks on the table had a softening effect on her rather cold blue eyes, and on the thin pale line of her delicate if resolute mouth.

"I think she will do," thought Mrs. Petworth, as she ate her grapes, not knowing how cleverly Mattie watched and imitated her manner of fingering them. "Moya requires so many things in a companion that it is hard to satisfy her. But I really quite think this young Mathilde will do."

The next morning, during breakfast, there was a little conversation, and Mattie made it clear to her hostess that she was an orphan quite alone in the world. She did not say in what condition of life her father had lived, or anything about his affairs, and, respecting her reserve, Mrs. Petworth made no enquiries. Her references had been found satisfactory, and that was sufficient for a lady who was entirely without vulgar curiosity.

After breakfast Mattie was taken over the whole *appartement*, as a probable amusement for a girl to whom a French domicile was something completely new. There was a French *salon* and an English drawing-room, one aglitter with gilding and fantastic

mirrors, objects of marble and ormolu, and with a brown waxed floor, shining and slippery; the other rich in Wilton carpets, Sheraton furniture, and rare china, the walls hung with fine old English engravings. The same variety was seen in the bedrooms.

"I have given you a French room," said Mrs. Petworth, "to accustom you to new ways."

Later, before the evening drive, while sipping tea in Mrs. Petworth's particular sanctum, her hostess began to tell her something about the lady she was to serve, and the duties that would be required of her.

"Lady Patrick is an amiable woman," she said, "bright and impulsive, and accustomed to be loved and obeyed. She rules everybody—her servants, her friends, and even her clever husband, who rules a good many people himself."

"How nice!" said Mattie.

"For her, you mean. Very often, I admit, for others also. But you, my dear, I hope you know how to be submissive."

"I will be at her feet," said Mattie.

"Not quite that, either," said Mrs. Petworth. "Not fawning, not flattering, not subservient—"

"No!" said Mattie.

"Just obedient and obliging," said Mrs. Petworth. "Many girls who want to make a way for themselves make the mistake of lingering on the road. Then, one day, they find themselves too old to make friends of the strangers they ought to have cultivated in the first instance. Most people are interested in a pliant, nice young girl—"

Mattie dropped her eyes,

"I don't mean to flatter you, my dear, but you have certain gifts which will enable you to attract. Don't let pride or vanity rob you of the advantages they promise you."

With a caution for which she gave herself no reason, Mattie abstained from asking Mrs. Petworth any question, or making any suggestion, that would lead her to mention Fandango the singer. She wanted and yet she did not want to know where he and Stine might be sojourning. She did not think they could be in Paris, as she would have seen his name on the bills for the opera. She hoped they were not, for, she told herself, she disliked the idea of meeting the girl who had forgotten all her friends.

Of course there was that necklace. She was keeping it faithfully in charge, and if she should meet Stine somewhere on some future day she would enjoy the honour and glory of giving it to her. She had not looked at it for quite a long time, nor even thought of it much. There it lay in its box, locked up in the pretty French *escritoire* which she had found for her convenience in her bedroom.

At present she did not want to remember anything in connection with it. She wanted to be her new self, *Mademoiselle Mathilde*, the companion of ladies who accepted her for what she appeared to be, and knew nothing about her antecedents.

Meanwhile, as the days went on, she listened with both her ears for any mention of Fandango that might happen to float past them.

At last she was rewarded for her vigilance. Mrs. Petworth, who was generous in entertaining her, took

her to the opera, and in a pause of the performance Mattie overheard a conversation behind her.

“Ah, poor Fandango!” said a woman’s voice.
“They have no tenor to equal him.”

“Quite knocked up, I hear,” said a man’s voice in reply.

“Lost his voice completely. Broken down and out of health,” said the first speaker.

“Where has he disappeared?”

“He has retired, I am told, to live somewhere away in the far East: can’t bear European life in his reverse of fortune. Won’t meet friends——”

“Natural, perhaps, but a mistake. That kind of sour rebellion brings no comfort. Fancy living in a tomb in the Egyptian desert with nothing to do but pick up scarabs!”

“He has a young daughter or some kind of relative to look after him.”

“Pleasant thing for her!”

“Might be worse. An educating experience for a young person. They will perhaps be writing a remarkable book between them some day, a striking contribution to Egyptology.”

“Meanwhile let us hear Fandango’s substitute!” said the man as the curtain rose.

Mattie glanced at her companion. Mrs. Petworth was studying the libretto, and apparently had not heard the conversation which was of so much importance to the girl at her side, who made no allusion to what she had heard. Why should she? The persons spoken of were nothing to Mrs. Petworth.

Mattie had the convenient faculty of temporarily dismissing serious or unpleasant matters till all

present enjoyment had been exhausted, and she deferred the consideration of the information she had gained, and gave herself up to the pleasure and excitement of the hour.

When all that was over, and she was back for the night in her boudoir bedroom, she took that conversation out of her memory and examined it as if it had been a scroll of writing.

She felt an unaccountable relief at knowing, first of all, that Stine and Fandango were away, and little likely to come across her path; and, secondly, that there had been no mention of poverty as part of his reverse of fortune. He had gone to a place where studies could be made and books to interest the world could be written. Fandango must have amassed a great deal of money, and would be well provided in his retirement. Stine could hardly wear her necklace in "the desert", nor was she likely to need the value of it in money. So long as it lay there safely in the *escritoire*, she, Mattie, was not robbing her of it. She could not be expected to travel away to a desert to deliver it up to her.

As she laid her head on her pillow a dream, the forerunner of sleep, just flitted across her brain. In it she saw herself as the charming mistress of a *château*, and Stine as a grim bespectacled author of works on Egyptology, meeting in some brilliant *salon* of scientists twenty odd years hence, when she, the beautiful Mathilde (a *marquise*, perhaps), would present the famous but unattractive authoress with the necklace she would not wear, as being unsuitable to her serious character and sober style.

"She will turn her pearls into money and be a rich

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woman in her old age; for Fandango will of course leave her his fortune," Mattie thought in her dream, out of which she started with a return to realities.

"And now they are living in a tomb and picking up scarabs," was her last thought. "What are scarabs, I wonder, and what kind of tomb do people live in?"

CHAPTER XXI

An Old Gothic Palace

MATTIE was now very much occupied by thoughts of Stine in Egypt.

She began to regret that her education had not extended as far as Egyptology, and pondered means of acquiring some useful knowledge on the subject. Cautiously she made it known to Mrs. Petworth that if invited to choose a volume from the lady's choice library it would be a book on Egypt.

Mrs. Petworth at once showed her a row of books which were at her disposal, and for some time she was absorbed in an account of recent excavations, which enlightened her as to the possibility of residence in a tomb, and on other such matters.

"I am greatly interested in scarabs," she said, as a result of an hour's reading. "I should so like to see one."

"Well, my dear, I can show you several," said Mrs. Petworth, and opened a drawer in a cabinet.

"So these are the things that Stine is picking up!" Mattie said to herself, while Mrs. Petworth was admiring her intelligent interest in antiquities.

"I must take you to see Egyptian antiquities more interesting than these," said the lady.

Mattie expressed her great desire to profit by such an offer, replaced the scarabs, and sat down again to

the delicate embroidery which she had taken pains to learn as a lady-like accomplishment.

Stine far away in that Egyptian desert; Stine picking up scarabs and living in a palace tomb! How little, thought Mattie, did Mrs. Petworth know how and why she had become interested in Egyptology! She was glad to think that her hostess knew nothing about persons so far removed from the world she lived in as Stine and the singer Fandango.

But if Mrs. Petworth knew little of the thoughts of her young guest and the promptings of her questions, as little did Mattie know of what was occupying the mind of her hostess while she sat at her bureau at the same moment writing to Stine in Toledo, and just as little did she know that Stine's letters were in a drawer within reach of her hand, and that hanging on the wall in Mrs. Petworth's bedroom was her portrait. So little do we know of each other's intimate affairs, where there is natural reserve on one side and where on the other caution keeps watch over confidence.

If Mattie had spoken to Mrs. Petworth of what was so much in her mind, had told her of her own family and friends, confided to her the story of the necklace, and asked her advice as to the disposal of it, she would have saved herself from a good deal of trouble in the days that were rapidly coming towards her. In relying absolutely on her own cleverness she was ignorant of the fact that wariness is not always cleverness, and that cunning may prove to be a serpent strangling its own purpose in its coils.

While she sat stitching at her embroidery, and weaving dreams that flitted from herself in her castle in the air to Stine in the desert, Mrs. Petworth's pen

was telling Stine in Toledo that just now she had staying with her a nice young English girl, for whom she had procured a position as secretary to a friend of hers.

"I think she will do," wrote the lady, "as she accommodates herself eagerly to French ways, even to the extent of calling herself Mathilde, though probably she is an English Matilda. *Complaisance* is an old-fashioned virtue, perhaps, but it becomes so rare that the word is nearly out of use. This little English girl is, I think, making efforts (unconsciously, perhaps) to revive the use of the quality."

Then, after a long letter of advice to Stine, Mrs. Petworth said to Mathilde:

"There are many places I want you to see, and to-day I am choosing the *Hôtel de Cluny*. It is one of the most delightful spots in Paris, for its memories and traces of antiquity as well as for the treasures it holds. I have been reading up Toledo, where a friend of mine is sojourning at present, and I find that in the *Hôtel Cluny* are preserved some exquisite votive crowns wrought in precious metal, the only relics of the Gothic period of the old Spanish city. These I should like to examine now, though I may have often looked at them without closely observing them."

Mattie was anxious to go to see everything that was to be seen, less from personal pleasure in objects of intrinsic beauty or historical interest than as being keenly aware of the importance of even a superficial acquaintance with things she would be expected to know.

"I must take note of things, so as to be able to talk

of them," she thought. With all her efforts at education her knowledge of French history was sketchy, and even the names of the great buildings and monuments were unfamiliar to her. She pondered over Mrs. Petworth's words, and at last said:

"I suppose only very rich people stay at a hotel where such splendid things are kept?"

She was asking herself whether Stine had ever stayed there when Fandango was singing in Paris.

"It is not a hotel in that sense," said Mrs. Petworth, smiling. "Great houses in Paris are often called *hôtels*. This one is a beautiful Gothic palace, built for the abbots of Cluny in the year 1490. It is perhaps the most ancient bit of Paris, built on the site of the palace of the Cæsars. Part of the great walls of the Roman baths remains, with a statue of the Emperor Julian, the just and gentle Cæsar who lived in Paris and loved his Paris so well. It is now used as a museum, a delightful shrine for exquisite treasures of art."

Mattie was confounded at her mistake, and resolved to ask no more questions about the places she was going to see. She applied herself to reading the books Mrs. Petworth put before her, and so picked up a little information on the history and the treasures of the splendid city.

She explored the Musée de Cluny industriously, sympathized with her friend's interest in the Visigothic crowns, especially that of the king who reigned in the seventh century, without a suspicion that Stine was the mainspring of that interest. Urged by the same interest, Mrs. Petworth lingered in the Gallery of Hispano-Moorish Pottery, and again Mattie pro-

fited by her instructions as they went along, ignorant of the links of affection that were drawing her companion towards the work of ancient Spain.

She took pains to echo Mrs. Petworth's enthusiasm in admiration of the beautiful old building, which is so fine an example of the genius of native French architecture modified by the influence of the Italian Renaissance. The chapel, the tower, the courtyard with its exquisite arches, were taken note of; the grand halls and fascinating rooms, with their noble carved chimneypieces; the wayward and charming ascent to chambers which have become gallery after gallery of European pottery of every kind, faïences, *della Robbia* ware, besides splendours of Moorish and Persian invention.

Then came lessons from Mrs. Petworth on Limoges enamel, Venetian glass, and fifteenth-century tapestries from Boussac, and the wonderful ivories dating from the sixth century downwards, the bronzes, the elaborate ironwork.

All these treasures of art were marked in Mattie's catalogue as things to be remembered, if possible, with sufficient distinctness to enable her to talk about them. Of their ideal worth to the world she had no innate feeling.

But for her lack of understanding and enthusiasm she made so much amends by her attention to instruction, and industry in taking notes of it, that Mrs. Petworth was encouraged in her desire to make sightseeing a means of education for this girl who was so willing and so intelligent as a learner, and so interesting as a companion.

“I am going to give you lessons in the history of

Paris," she said that evening, after they had talked over their visit to the Hôtel Cluny. "All the way up from the days of Julian in his Roman palace, of Robert's piety and charity, of Philip's corruption rebuked by St. Bernard, who called the royal abbey of St. Denis 'a house of Satan, a den of thieves'; of Philip Augustus building the city walls and paving the streets to keep down the mud, of St. Louis, the king, walking barefoot, carrying the ransomed relic of the Crown of Thorns to the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, and building the beautiful Sainte Chapelle to enshrine it."

Mrs. Petworth paused and laughed.

"A long way to travel after all that," she said, "up through ages of the real darkness of inhuman cruelty and the contrasting illumination of loving faith, of the wonders of art, of glorious temples raised to God, glowing with gold and silver and encrusted with jewels, of sacred manuscripts painted in exquisite colours, of sculptures that seem to make the saints live again, of solid splendour and dazzling brilliance everywhere. So little did those dark ages know of the darkness of our dull, material modern age! A long way to travel, surely, but we will do as many steps of the road as can be done in a few weeks. You will not tire of it, I hope, my dear Mathilde?"

"Oh no!" said Mattie; "it will all be so useful to me."

"Five years ago I took a girl by the same road—quite a little girl—and I have not yet forgotten her passion of interest in everything."

Mrs. Petworth was thinking of Stine. Mattie had for the time forgotten her.

CHAPTER XXII

A Bitter Regret

STINE sat reading Mrs. Petworth's letter in the patio of a house in Toledo, a little court ornamented with a gleaming band of *azulejos*, and with a well and some low-growing trees in the centre.

It was a peaceful spot, shut off even from the quiet world of Toledo by a long passage and one of those doors in Arabian porches that have been said to look like doors of palaces in fairyland, studded over with great ornamental nails of carven iron. Rugs, chairs, and a table were gathered round the well. The heat of the day being over, the awning had been removed, and the glory of the evening sky made a canopy of light and colour above this cool retreat which might seem to unaccustomed eyes like a dwelling place in a dream, or perhaps a reality of life in some other state of existence.

The doors of the house were in the walls all round the patio. A maid came out of one of them now, carrying coffee, biscuits, and fruit, which she placed on the table beside Señor Fandango, the man who had sung to all Europe for its delight, and who at this moment looked out on the world from this shady corner in sullen silence.

He reclined in his easy chair, wrapped in an Oriental

robe de chambre, wearing a Moorish cap, and lazily fingering his favourite pipe—a rare pipe, with a daintily carved bowl, which had been presented to him long ago by an enthusiastic music lover in the days of his triumph.

Stine, smiling over her letter, made a charming figure in this Spanish interior, a year older than she appeared in Mrs. Petworth's portrait of her, tall and lissom, with a face full of rich colour, eyes dark, yet radiating light and sweetness. Her frock of primrose print and little black lace veil lent their folds and tints to the general picture.

Fandango, watching her with fatherly fondness, asked what was in the letter to make her smile.

“Just the kindness of heart,” said Stine, “for me and for everybody. She has got another girl to look after and educate. When I think of all she did for me, I feel that her Mathilde is a lucky young person.”

“And you are not jealous of her?” said Fandango.

“I am delighted,” said Stine, “both for her and for the girl. Jealousy is only for silly old daddies.”

So far was Stine removed from the moment when she had demurred to call her self-appointed guardian even by the name of uncle that now he was her daddy. Only in ungenerous natures will gratitude strike no root. The years of unfailing kindness and solicitude for her welfare and happiness had endeared this ailing and disappointed man to the child he had adopted through his own gratitude for the service of a small creature in the saving of his life. Gratitude grown from gratitude had formed an enduring bond

between these two, who continued to be helpful to each other.

Fandango winced when Stine spoke those jesting words about "the jealousy of silly old daddies". She had little idea of how his jealousy had worked in cutting her off from her early friends by his destruction of her letters to Keefe. Again and again her letters addressed to New Brick Street in the east of London had been taken by him to post, and had been burned instead of posted. At last she had made up her mind that Keefe was either dead or had forgotten her. Later still she had felt assured that he was not dead, as the letters had not been returned to her through the post office.

Much to Fandango's annoyance, she had often talked over the question with him, asking his opinion or appealing to him for advice. He had not counted on such long, faithful memory, such perseverance in considering causes and possibilities. It was too late now to undo what he had done, nor did he wish that it could be proved to be not yet too late. For the last year Stine had ceased to trouble him with her regrets; but the reason of her forbearance was not that she had outgrown memory, it was only that she refrained from discussing disagreeable subjects with a mind that was already overwhelmed with disappointment.

On a little bench or stool beside her now was a pile of books, all on subjects interesting to a dweller in Toledo: a history of Spain, a history of the Moors, a volume of *Don Quixote*, the *Chronicle of the Cid*, Lockhart's *Spanish Ballads*, a book descriptive of travel in Morocco, another of the wanderings of an artist in Spanish deserts, hills, and gardens. Beside

the books was a basket of linen to be mended, also pencils, and a sketching block with a half-finished drawing on the face of it.

Stine was in the habit of reading aloud to her guardian while he drank his coffee, and there was a mark between the pages of the volume of the *Life of Cervantes* at the part descriptive of his lodging place in Toledo, and of the Zocodover as it was in the days when he walked in it. They were familiar with all the haunts of the gentle master of humour, and the ruins of the wretched inn where he lived while writing some of his deathless works; the narrow streets, so narrow that friends could shake hands from window to window across the way, were trod by their own feet every day; the splendid Plaza of the Zocodover, unique and charming even in these days of the decay of the glorious old city, was just beside them. Stine made her purchases in the shops within the arcade that runs all round it, and in the evening it pleased Fandango to saunter with her among the promenaders, amused by the picturesque groups in the moving crowd gathered there for recreation in the cool twilight.

Stine now opened her book and began to read, but Fandango was restless and did not care to listen. It seemed as if Mrs. Petworth's letter had taken him back into the past, and roused up memories not only connected with her and with Stine, but with much that lay far beyond the days of his earliest acquaintance with either. Stine had become accustomed to his moods, and put down the book and took up her sewing, willing to talk if he wanted to talk, or to be silent if she saw him lapse into one of his long, troubled dreams.

He was so long silent that the girl glanced at him anxiously from time to time, and seeing a deeper melancholy settling on his face, she gave him a cheery smile, saying:

“What are you fretting about, Daddy?”

“I wish I could tell you,” said Fandango.

“What is to hinder?” said Stine. “Of what use am I in the world if I cannot sympathize with one who has done everything for me?”

“I haven’t done everything. I wanted to give you a fortune, and I have squandered my money so that I have left myself without the power to do it.”

“Who wants a fortune?” said Stine. “I don’t. Haven’t we enough to live on as we do? Are we not comfortable? Is not God good to us? It’s a beautiful world, Daddy. Come out and have a look at it.”

“Not now,” said Fandango.

“Then let me know your mind,” said Stine. “Whatever is the trouble I’ll laugh you out of it.”

She had often seen him in this mood, and hardly expected him to continue the conversation. But he did so.

“It is strange,” he said, “how the ghost of an old trouble will rise after long years during which you thought it was laid for ever.”

Stine was startled. The loss of his voice, the loss of his money, she had thought to be all the cause of his melancholy in these latter days.

“Will it?” she said. “Then lay it again, Daddy.”

“As one grows older,” said Fandango, “things assume different proportions. Important things become trivial and trivial things grow important. The

ghost that youth found easy to lay refuses to be laid when it rises again."

"If youth is required for the business, couldn't I lay it for you, Daddy? I'm young enough to try it."

The cloud on the man's face lifted for a moment, while he gave her a peculiar smile that betrayed his absolute fatherly love for this child of his adoption.

"Whatever could be done vicariously you would do if I allowed you," he said. "But there are a few stubborn facts that conscience reveals to us, sometimes only by degrees, and one is that an ill-done deed can only be undone by the hand that did it, or that an evil omission must be wiped out by fulfilment in the same way, or remains, like a dropped stitch that, not picked up at once, will unravel and ruin the entire fabric."

Stine nodded assent. "But this could never trouble you, Daddy," she said. "You never omitted to do a kindness that was put in your way."

"Kindness to those you love is not everything," said Fandango. "Duty comes first. Payment of debt, fulfilment of obligation, restraint of indulgence that lays a burden on another."

He paused, and Stine's quick eyes saw a spasm of keener pain pass across his countenance. She feared his mind was giving way under stress of some morbid imagination too silently endured, a result of his broken health and reverse of fortune.

"If any such scruple is worrying you, Daddy," she said, "speak it out to me. Fretting in silence is no good thing. You, the best man in all the world, could have no cause for the regrets you hint at. If

I cannot laugh you out of your fancy as I said, I am sure I can reason you out of it."

"I should have to tell you a long story," he said, after a pause during which his mind seemed far away. "If I could put it in a few words it would relieve me to talk about it. Don't be frightened, child, I never murdered anybody. It was only a cruel piece of neglect, a crime of thoughtless ingratitude. I was young, selfish, self-indulgent, poor, and struggling—"

"Just tell the whole story," said Stine. "It can't be too long for me."

"Shortly, it was this. A generous friend lent me the money that enabled me to come before the world as an educated singer. Success rushed on me and turned my head. I forgot my benefactor, and squandered the money with which I ought to have repaid his generosity. When I noticed that he had ceased to write affectionate letters to me, rejoicing at my 'triumph' as he called it, I scarcely cared. I had married a lovely girl of my own Andalusia, and we lived in Paradise, with our only child, an angelic little girl whom we idolized. After a very few years both wife and child were dead and my heart was broken."

"Oh, Daddy!" cried Stine pitifully, "I never knew that you had suffered all this. You never told me!"

"You have been my comfort," said the man. "God took those I loved and gave me you. But I have not told you all yet. In my sorrow I remembered the friend who had been the source of my prosperity and happiness, and I wrote to him craving pardon for my ingratitude, telling him of my affliction, and asking his sympathy and renewal of friendship. I told him

of my anxiety as to my pecuniary debt to him. I had more money now than I knew what to do with."

"Well, Daddy, was he not satisfied?" asked Stine, as Fandango made another long pause.

"He was dead," said the man in a low voice, drooping his head and looking on the ground, "dead in poverty. If I had repaid my debt in time he might have been saved. So my conscience keeps telling me."

Stine was silent. Not a word was said for a few minutes, and then the girl drew a long breath and said:

"That was a hard blow."

"More than that—his wife was also dead, and the only child they had left, a son, had disappeared. All the enquiries I could make availed nothing—I could not come on any trace of the boy, who, as far as I could learn, had been left in poverty, a waif on the world. He too may be dead, yet I do not conclude that he is. He may have been brought up in some charity school, and may now be labouring at some humble occupation. He may be suffering hardship—friendless and in bad health—I know not what. And I am the dishonest keeper of his father's money."

Stine had put down her sewing and was gazing with all her heart in her eyes at the self-accusing man.

"Can we not yet hope to find him?" she said.

"If he is not dead it is still possible," said Fandango; "but here again is another kind of punishment awaiting me. If I had found him in the height of my prosperity I could have repaid my debt to him without injuring you. Now, if I were to find him and

give him all I justly owe him, it would impoverish me so that the dower I intended for you would be made over to him. That is what I meant when I said that I had squandered what ought to be yours."

"But are we not comfortable and contented here?" said Stine. "Our living does not cost a great deal, and if you have still money enough to pay the debt let us go on trying to find the boy, and to surprise him with good fortune. Oh, I am so glad you have told me, Daddy! To think of your having all that sorrow and anxiety stored up in your mind and sharing it with nobody!"

"How hope to find him now?" said Fandango. "And the bitterest part of it is that I cannot say I hope it now. My conscience has been fully roused to the duty of such hoping, just when I have ceased to wish to see the face of the man—for he is now a man, wherever he is—whose unexpected stroke of good fortune is bound to leave you unprovided for."

CHAPTER XXIII

“For that Boy of Yours!”

THE hearing of the story of Fandango's living regret, and his desire to make restitution to the son of his injured friend, if he could find him, made a turning-point in Stine's life.

After a wakeful night she sprang up joyfully, feeling that she had got a new and delightful interest in existence. She had been a potterer with brush and pencil; now she would become an earnest worker with the same. She had gratified herself at moments of a certain inspiration. Now she would humbly, but hopefully, serve Art in the strenuous way that Art demands of those who would win her favour.

Her thoughts turned eagerly to an artist friend of Mrs. Petworth, who had asked her to go to see him at his house near one of the great old gates of Toledo.

Fandango looked at her almost reproachfully when she brought him his coffee.

“Why so gay?” he said. “One would think you had been quite charmed with the confession I made you yesterday.”

“So I am, Daddy,” she said. “I know now what ails you, and I am going to do my share of putting things right.”

"I think you are capable of doing anything humanly possible," he said dolefully, "but some things are beyond you."

"Some things, yes. Some other things are the things I mean to do. For one, I am going to be an artist, and make a fortune to settle on that boy of yours as soon as we find him."

Fandango laughed. "I am still capable of being amused," he said. "Go on, my dear, and amuse me more."

"You remember Mr. Aaron Fisher, whom Mrs. Petworth sent to call on us? He is a famous painter of Spanish subjects. He said some kind things. I think he will take me up—"

"Do you mean to marry him and leave me?" asked Fandango jealously.

"I couldn't, seeing that he is very much and long married to a nice old lady. Why, Daddy, he is quite an old man! Don't you remember his fine white beard?"

"What do you mean to do then, when he takes you up?"

"I intend him to make me a real artist—"

"A great painter like himself. I admire the modesty of your expectations, madam."

"Now, don't jeer, Daddy. He said I had a very pretty gift. And perhaps, if I work hard, it may grow into something more than pretty."

"And when you are a famous painter, like Rosa Bonheur or Madame Vigée le Brun, you will go about the world receiving compliments and making a fortune—as I did myself! And then some great prince will come out of a fairy tale and snap you

away from me, and your poor old daddy will be left lonely.”

“He shan’t!” said Stine. “If the prince refuses to marry us both I won’t have him.”

“I am not going to live under the patronage of your prince!” said Fandango crossly.

“Not even if his palace were to be the Alhambra, and he gave you the Court of the Lions for your own little playground?”

“And you were the ‘fair princess walking in the garden, covered with pearls, and augmenting its beauty’, as the old Arabic distich on the fountain’s marble basin puts it.”

“Exactly!” said Stine, her eyes dancing at the conceit.

“Well, I will have none of it!” said Fandango.

“I am glad of that, for neither will I endure it,” said Stine.

“Let me understand how you mean to proceed,” said Fandango.

“I mean to ask Mr. Aaron Fisher to allow me to study under his direction. He has already asked me to go to see his studio, and I will start this very morning.”

“I see how it is. You want to make money, to be independent of your daddy.”

“I want to make money, if I can, so that we may be ready for that boy of yours whenever we may meet him.”

“A dream!” said Fandango. “Girls like you do not know how to make money. Or if they do, they are not allowed to make it. Some monster of a man comes and swallows them up.”

"He should find me very hard to swallow, even if he tried," said Stine, laughing. "My life is my own, and I intend to do what I like with it. My desire is to be a happy artist, painting pictures of Toledo, and living here with you."

"And when the world gets tired of pictures of Toledo painted by you and Mr. Aaron Fisher, and refuses to look at any more, what will you do then?"

"I can't see so far away," said Stine; "but perhaps you might be tired of Toledo yourself by that time, and then we could move on, you know. Have another cup of coffee, Daddy. I am going to start at once for the Puerta del Cambron."

She had a long walk to accomplish before the heat of noon. Her way led her through narrow, twisting streets that wound up and down mysteriously between rocks, as if trying to hide themselves, perhaps from the sun, perhaps from a beleaguering enemy, or maybe to keep the dwellings near each other for mere friendliness, one house giving its shadow to cool its opposite neighbour, lovers smiling at each other from window to window, or friends talking across the ribbon of shadowy passageway.

Stine knew all the windings of that twisted thread of streets, and never trod them without stopping many times to wonder at the lingering remains of ancient magnificence, the picturesque façades, lonely in their mouldering decay, the silent dwellings, inhabited by no busy life, standing with open doors, which no one seemed to quit or to enter.

To the stranger they might seem untenanted, unless he lingered long enough to meet a fruit seller coming up the street, her mule laden with oranges

and bananas, or a water carrier crying his *aqua fresca*, or a pedlar with his pack; and to see Doña Catalina or Doña Isobel coming forth to make a picture on the threshold of the open doorway, and to cater in her grand, quiet way for the needs of her household.

In making her sketches Stine had often watched for the figures that were to give life to the scene, whether of the itinerant trader, slowly moving up the tortuous street, the housewife at her door in her big white apron and kerchief veil, the graceful lady leaning over the balcony to talk to a friend in the opposite window, or perhaps a beautiful girl signing to the pedlar to carry his pack into the house for her inspection.

Now she was keeping aware of street corners where a ruined palace or a mighty and desolate tower made foreground for bewitching views of distant *puente* or *puerta*, the magnificent bridges and gates of approach to the once strong-walled and fortified and river-girt city of regal Toledo.

Of any of these could she hope to make a finished picture, she who was only a dreamer and learner? Could she even hint at the enchantment of these ruined splendours that had survived the pride and the strife of the humanity that had created them—splendours remaining for the artist who could see a glory around them greater than ever conceived of by the long-dead makers, a glory that owed nothing to the glamour of mere worldly triumph?

The house of Mr. Aaron Fisher was a big building standing above the Puerta del Cambron, overlooking the windings of the Tagus as it passes from the bridge of San Martin, and commanding a wide view over a land of smiling meadow and fruitful orchard. The

sun was already high when Stine drew near it, and she got under the shadow of a rock to rest awhile and consider how, after all, she was to present herself with her bold petition to the great man of whom she knew only a little.

While she sat, her thoughts were distracted from herself by the insistent beauty and witchery of the distant dream city before her, with its fairy-like palaces and pinnacles, its irregular shapes of aerial colour, its tower-crowned rocks climbing by gradual ascent, or soaring by leaps and bounds out of the delicate greens and blues of the landscape, to lose themselves in the blue of the heavens and the dazing glamour of the intensifying sunshine.

Then a thought, a memory which she never shared with anyone, rose in her mind and remained there until she banished it by rising and going on her way—the memory of the days of her childhood; the streets of the East End of London; the piteous struggles of Mammy Milsom, and her own desire to be of use to her; the tender affection of Keefe, and his passionate and constant demand for her sympathy.

Why had they all so completely forgotten her? Keefe had seemed to want her more than all the rest, and yet it was he who had refused to answer her letters, who had deliberately cast her out of his life.

She never looked at any of the noble monuments around her here without a thought of Keefe and his ambition to do some such glorious work. Had he been obliged to give up his desires, and to content himself by earning a workman's pay at a common workman's daily labour? How had he continued his education?



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STINE IN THE STREETS OF TOLEDO

What sort of man was he by this time? Five years ago, when they last saw each other on that sorrowful morning at the railway terminus, he was sixteen years of age. He was now twenty-one, and must have made a real start on whatever road of life he was to travel.

The same five years had brought Stine to the age of seventeen, and those years were a long period to look back on by one who had been a child and now felt herself a woman. But of all that lay behind those years, with their solid frontage of more recent events and experiences, her memory was fresh and true.

Sitting there under her shady rock, the exquisite scene before her eyes dissolved away, and in its place she saw the dreary streets of the East End of London.

CHAPTER XXIV

Encouragement

AARON FISHER was an artist whose happy circumstances had enabled him to work out his genius on the lines best suited to it, with everlasting enthusiasm and with the tranquil ease afforded by pecuniary security. His fine imagination had never been vexed and thwarted by the clamorous demand of necessity for "pot-boilers". Not that he had been without his struggle in early life, for he had been born to no independent fortune, but that the wife he had married for love had inherited wealth unexpectedly, after she had first proved her devotion to him in the days of his difficulty.

She was now a little, rosy, comfortable woman, growing old like himself, but still all alive with good humour and energy and unabated sympathy with his work. Half their year was spent in their picturesque house at Toledo, with its charming old Spanish interior and broad terrace overlooking a world of unspeakable beauty; and the other half in England, chiefly in London, where Fisher's periodical return to his studio was hailed by a host of friends and admirers. His faithful devotion to Spain, and especially to Toledo, was almost a grievance to friends

who thought his native land worthy of the exclusive attention of her sons of genius. But the power and beauty of his work was acknowledged and lauded all over the world of artistic culture.

Few travellers of taste passed through Toledo without trying to get an introduction to Aaron Fisher, busy in his studio, or at leisure on the broad terrace where he loved to receive his visitors and to enjoy their astonished delight at the enchanting view out-spread beneath them—the distant sombre, reddish-purple hills, the fairy-like city with its spires and domes, Gothic and Moorish, climbing its heights and descending into its depths, the golden gleam of the river, the brilliant and delicate verdure and bloom of the wide-stretching Vega.

The Fishers had but one daughter, married and living in England, who sometimes visited them at Toledo, bringing her little children. Of their two sons, one was a barrister in London, and the other a student of astronomy, who spent most of his time in the Lick Observatory in America. They were thus separated for long intervals from their own children, and were all the better pleased on that account to see Stine's fresh young face coming to enliven them.

She found them now resting in their patio, a beautiful court floored with Moorish tiles, a fountain playing in the centre, the whole enclosure shaded by orange trees. Extended on luxurious lounges, the owners of this charming retreat were chatting lazily after a short siesta.

“What is all this you have brought me?” said the artist, taking a portfolio from her hands.

“A quantity of my daubs and scratches,” said

Stine, laughing and blushing. "I must rest a little and gather up my courage before I can tell you why I have brought them to you."

"Rest and a little refreshment," said Mrs. Fisher, as a youth in picturesque costume came in with fruit and coffee and sweetmeats. In this half-English half-Spanish *ménage* some of the servants were lifelong friends who had come with their master and mistress from England, and others were descendants of those Moors who created so large a share of the beauty that now reigns supreme over the magnificent decay of Toledo.

"Put off your veil," said the artist. "I am going to make a sketch of you presently, before the colour from your walk leaves your cheeks. A northern rose is a grateful exotic among southern magnolias, however beautiful."

"Let me say a few words to you first. If I wait too long my audacity may evaporate—fade like my colour," said Stine urgently.

"Please be quick then," said the artist.

"Oh, Aaron, allow the child to drink her coffee!" cried Mrs. Fisher.

"It is done," said Stine, replacing her cup on the table and seizing the portfolio. "I want you to look at these and tell me if there is ever so little hope that by hard work—very hard, you know—I may hope to become a tolerable artist."

Mr. Aaron Fisher smiled and his eyebrows went up. Stine kept her eyelids drooped while she spoke, from fear of seeing discouragement in his face at the first moment of the shock of his surprise.

"What is your idea of hard work?" said the artist,

slowly opening the portfolio. "The work for a girl like you is to be beautiful and to make other people happy. It is the artist's province to create beauty, but you are the real thing already created."

Stine looked up at him with troubled eyes. "I was hoping you would take me seriously," she said.

"I am doing so. These sketches of yours are very striking. I consider them really clever. They gratify yourself and they gratify your friends. Why burden yourself with work to do more?"

"I want to get money," said Stine.

"I am shocked. I had no suspicion you were such a covetous little woman. Does not your good uncle delight in giving you all you require—pretty frocks and dainty little shoes, and a lace veil to make you look like a Spanish *doncella*?"

"Do you not approve of a woman who thinks of others besides herself?" said Stine. "I thought perhaps you would. Why should selfishness be altogether feminine?"

"It isn't," said Aaron Fisher. "Look at my wife. Did she ever paint a picture or earn a penny? And is she not the most unselfish woman from one end of the world to another—let us say from the Zoco-dover down yonder to Covent Garden Markets?"

"Oh, Aaron!" protested Mrs. Fisher. "What are you talking about?"

"You, my dear. Let this girl marry a troublesome, fussy artist, as you did me; and if she wants to do hard work, let her sweep his floor and cook his food, as you did."

"At first—for a time, till the money came," said Mrs. Fisher.

"If the money had never come you would have gone on doing it," said her husband. "She insists on doing it sometimes still—thinks the cooks will make an end of me if she does not look to it; likes to make some mess with her own hand and bring it to me."

"You needn't publish my eccentricities," said Mrs. Fisher. "Service for love or for a freak is one thing, the 'hard work' you propose to Stine as a life occupation is another. What would become of the beauty you think a sufficient reason for her existence, on the lines you propose?"

"A good and charming woman never loses her beauty," said the artist gallantly; "it only passes into different phases."

"Oh, man, man!" cried Mrs. Fisher in mock distress. "Always ready to sacrifice us to his whim, always with a reason in support of his theory of the moment!"

"Well," said Stine, "I am willing to do all he needs for my uncle with one hand, and to make a little money with the other—not from covetousness, but to relieve his anxiety."

"Nonsense!" said Aaron Fisher. "Excuse me, but you mustn't tell me that Fandango has not made heaps of money."

"And spent it," said Stine, "spent it generously while it was flowing in."

"And saved nothing! Monstrous!" cried Fisher.

"The loss of his voice was unexpected. He is not an old man. He has enough to live on, as we live, but an old debt is troubling him."

"More shame to have any debt," said Fisher,

"No, no!" said Stine. "You must not say so——"

"Aaron, the shame is for you," said his wife softly.
"The child is crying."

"Forgive me, my dear; don't spoil your pretty eyes!" said the artist.

"My eyes are of little consequence," said Stine, "unless they may do something to help my uncle, who has been a father to me."

"Art requires more than a commercial ambition," said Aaron Fisher.

"Have I not a higher ambition as well?" said Stine indignantly. "You make me sorry that I have confided my uncle's affairs to you. My love of art is as great as yours. But love is not always power, and all I have wanted to know from you is, whether I have even a little of the power that must enable the love——"

"Don't let your eloquence choke you, my little girl," said the artist kindly; "and forgive the arrogance of an impertinent old paint-brush——"

"You see what he is, my dear," said Mrs. Fisher sweetly. "Oh, if you only knew him as I do! The more he scolds, the more he is going to help you."

"Nothing like a wife for giving a man a character," said Aaron Fisher. "Let us go out on the terrace and get a little more light on these productions."

Seated on the terrace he re-opened Stine's portfolio and carefully examined in turn every little sketch and more or less finished drawing it contained. When all was done his mocking mood had vanished, and he began to consider seriously the question of the girl's sufficiency of talent to enable her to become a real artist.

"I think that if you stick to it, and work as you believe you can work, you may really do very well," he said.

Stine's eyes grew radiant.

"Ah, won't I just work!" she said.

"Come to me here as a pupil, any day and every day you like. And when we have produced a great picture we will hang it in the Royal Academy Exhibition. Now, Lucy, I hope you are admiring your husband's heroic spirit of self-sacrifice. Up till now he has had Toledo more or less as a field for himself; after this he will have to clear out, make over the property to another, place the laurels on a younger brow! Oh, you can laugh, ladies! But when you have laughed I will say it again. Here is an audacious young woman coming to depose me."

"Don't be ridiculous, Aaron," said his wife, still laughing. "You will depress the child with your nonsense."

"Not a bit of it," said Fisher. "She has a brazen courage. I see it in her eyes."

Stine nodded. "Presumption is too poor a word to describe me," she said.

"Very well, my dear. When will you come to take your first lesson?"

"The first moment you allow me to come."

"To-morrow, then. And now I am going to walk home with you. In future you must come very early in the morning, lunch here, and depart as soon as the cool hour comes round. We cannot have you walking the streets at a late hour by yourself."

"But you are too kind. It will be late when you get back here this evening."



C 681

“STINE'S EYES GREW RADIANT. ‘AH, WON'T I JUST WORK!’ SHE CRIED”

"Nothing more delightful to me than such a late walk. And oh, Lucy, that young man Roberts, who was to have come this evening, has not turned up! He will hardly come now. If he should while I am away you must keep him all night. Another of Mrs. Petworth's introductions," he explained.

"Oh!" said Stine.

"Yes. You are not the only young person patronized by that good lady."

"I know," said Stine. "She is a universal benefactress."

"Well, we shall see how much I shall be benefacted by this travelling American. I am not sure that he is as youthful as you, for instance. And architecture is his hobby rather than painting, I understand. He shall be made welcome, however, and Americans are often very amusing."

"I should think an architect would be enchanted with Toledo," said Stine.

"Yes, if he has the right stuff in him," said the artist. "But the world grows so vulgar. Who knows what kind of erection he is thinking of setting up in Boston or New York, or maybe Ottawa! He will probably enlighten our Dark-Age ignorance by denouncing Moorish and Gothic genius alike, and predict wonders that are to be done for the New World by the new century."

Stine was thinking of Keefe. His were no vulgar ideals, boy though he was. She thought, as she had often thought before, of how he would have rejoiced in the beauty and magnificence to which her own eyes were becoming accustomed. What a glorious good fortune it would have been for him if anyone could

have taken him by the hand and led him round the world, to call at Toledo!

After all, what a pity Señor Fandango had not adopted Keefe rather than herself!

“Why so silent, my dear?” said the artist, as they went out in the cool air and saw the dream-like city in a new aspect, shimmering in the ethereal light rising before them.

“I was thinking of architecture,” said Stine. “I hope Mrs. Petworth’s American friend will not waste his opportunity.”

CHAPTER XXV

The Three Students

THE three travelling students of architecture, Roberts, Castellan, and Keefe Kavanagh, were in the cathedral of Toledo at sunset, taking advantage of the happiest hour of the day for making their observations of an interior that has been pronounced the most majestic as well as the most sumptuous in the world.

As they moved silently through the forest of columns and jewelled windows, slowly traversing the immense naves, even they, who for three years had been exploring the great temples of Europe, felt the spell of awe that comes on everyone on entering this amazing monument of Castilian genius.

Man is too small for the expression of admiration, is stunned by the mysterious eloquence of the silence of so much lofty magnificence, is forced to strive with the sense of his own insignificance before he can begin to examine or even to realize details of a whole overwhelming in its immensity, at once so exquisite and so gorgeous. That mere man should have been able to create splendour seemingly supernatural, harmony so superb and majestic, out of mere stonework and painted glass, appeals to one as a lie invented by human vanity. The angels must have done it, or some strong heroic race of God's creatures, who lived

on earth before the coming of the small beings who now move about these floors, stupefied by what they see above and around them.

The three young architects had entered by the great Door of the Pardon, with its magnificent arch covered with Gothic ornaments and figures. Now they stood silent in the central nave, which soars above the five wide naves that cross it, the side aisles emulating its loftiness with the spring of their seventy-two vaults from eighty-eight pillars, each composed of sixteen light columns.

Through seven hundred and fifty glorious stained windows the sunset poured their flashing lights, jewelling pillar and pavement with ruby, amethyst, emerald, topaz, and sapphire; filling the air with glories of colour, bathing the gazer in flames of iridescent fire.

After much patient uplifting of the eyes, the three friends were able to distinguish the vivid scenes from the New Testament portrayed in jewel-glass in the radiant distance above them, pictures which, though set in those far-off heights, are as perfect in their execution as the most finished paintings.

Having made drawings of the plan of the building, they lingered at the Door of the Lions, examining its wealth of sculptures, exquisite with figures and leafage, enriched with scenes from the Old Testament, and distinguished by the six carved lions seated on the six columns of the atrium.

While they lingered, they discussed the comparative beauties of the great European temples visited by them in the course of their studies during the last three years.

"Have we seen anything anywhere more beautiful than this?" said Roberts, in a burst of enthusiasm.

"The Parthenon!" said Keefe.

"I hold by the Etruscans," said Castellan.

"Nothing so superb as this in imaginative beauty—as an interior," said Roberts.

"True," said Keefe. "It appeals to one like something supernatural."

"I confess the memory of it will haunt me through life," said Castellan.

"The more so," said Keefe, "because it stands here so out of the world of glory and power that created it, left behind in this decaying city among rocks, little known or seen, like a beautiful creature doomed to inevitable death."

"What measure of time will reduce it to the condition of the Parthenon?" said Roberts.

"You may ask the same question of all that we have seen," said Castellan.

"I suppose it is a question of repair," said Roberts.

"Where is the repairing power in a place like this?"

"Repair means money, of course," said Castellan.

"American millions had better look to it. Couldn't be in better hands than in yours, old fellow."

Roberts laughed.

"What are you and Kavanagh going to design and to build that will rise up in the thoroughfares of the New World and take the place in time vacated by monuments such as this—when their splendours have mouldered away?"

"Ask what kind of men they were who attempted and accomplished what is here," said Keefe.

"They had courage," said Castellan.

"And they had faith," said Keefe. "These works were done in the service of God, and went hand in hand with the care of the poor. Now the millions are not enough to give food to the hungry."

"That thought is urged on one every foot of the way," said Castellan. "What multitudes of workmen, what generations of artists of all the arts, were maintained by the creation of this monument to the Creator! What painters, what sculptors, what goldsmiths, what workers of jewels and glass, what music makers in the choirs!—not to speak of the stonecutters and hodmen, the carpenters, the iron-hammerers, the ladder-climbers, all of whom ate bread by the slow and sure and perfect growth to its present magnificence of this shrine, imagined, and realized, and offered to the majesty of God by the leal hearts of his creatures."

"Now you have man's devotion to himself, the financier's bank, the Stock Exchange, motors, airships, and the workhouse," said Roberts. "I'm afraid there is little chance for your monuments of the future, gentlemen," said Roberts.

"Yet we have faith still," said Keefe.

"Kavanagh would like to design and build a cathedral even better than this in the middle of a moving bog in Ireland," said Roberts.

Keefe nodded.

"Well, my dear fellow, drain your bog first," said Castellan.

"It shall be done," said Keefe.

Then they all laughed, and as the sunset splendours vanished from the fairy windows aloft they put up their portfolios and went home to their inn.

After supper they strolled about the Zocodover in the moonlight, amusing themselves by watching the people enjoying the cool air, the great old picturesque marketplace all alive with promenaders, soldiers in uniform, priests in costume, graceful women in their veils, muleteers, girls carrying their pitchers, beggars hoping for alms. Here Cervantes walked, and just down yonder is the ruined inn where he lodged and wrote.

The three travellers sat on a stone bench and talked of him and of the slight changes he would find in the ancient Plaza if he were to return to walk among the people with his eyes full of his magical humour, perhaps to buy a much-needed something in the shops that still run inside the rough arcade.

"To-morrow I must tramp out to see old Aaron Fisher," said Roberts. "I would not miss him for the world. Which of you will come with me?"

"Not I," said Keefe. "I must have one more day for exploration."

"Nor I," said Castellan. "We have not half done Toledo, and you are wanting us to move on elsewhere."

"We can return this way," said Roberts.

"Who can promise to return anywhere?" said Castellan.

"You think 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush?' I agree, and so I will walk out to-morrow to the Puerta del Cambron and pay my visit to Aaron Fisher," said Roberts.

"I should like to go; but one can see pictures of Toledo in the exhibitions, while the reality may never again be before our eyes," said Keefe.

"All right!" said Roberts. "You are the fellow to win in the race! Castellan is a dreamer and I am nothing but a potterer, only fit to act as a courier to my betters."

"And a purse-bearer," said Keefe, laughing. "Whatever I may be, I believe in repaying a benefactor by seizing all the advantages provided by his generosity."

"Now, no sentiment, Kavanagh!" said Roberts, "or I will turn the tables on you. A pretty fellow I should be without you two, stalking about the world to indulge a fad unaccompanied by the genuine articles of genius and work!"

As they walked towards their inn Keefe little knew that he was passing by the house where Stine lived, and that her eyes were actually resting upon him. Having extinguished her lights for the night, she looked out into the moonlight and noticed that three men passing had the air of strangers. Little did she imagine that Keefe was one of them.

Neither could she have guessed that the man who walked into Aaron Fisher's studio the next morning was another, still less that he was the companion in study and travel of the friend she had so suddenly and cruelly lost five years ago.

"We have been expecting you for some days, Mr. Roberts," said Aaron Fisher.

"I have been only a week in Toledo," said Roberts, "and what a place it is to run away with time!"

"That is why I give so much time to it," said Fisher.

"And what a record!" said Roberts, looking round on the pictures disposed for his inspection. "You

are a happy man with both genius and opportunity. I wonder if you would allow me to buy and carry off this small picture—just as much in size as I could take with me——?”

“Certainly,” said Fisher, smiling at Stine, “but that is the work of my pupil. Perhaps she will be willing to let you have it.”

Stine looked up with a warm colour of surprise rushing to her cheeks. Here was a quick and unexpected success! She gladly sold her picture to the American visitor, and accepted an order for a companion painting, to be ready for the purchaser on his return at some future time to Toledo.

“We shall probably return this way in the course of a few months,” said Roberts, “and then I hope to be allowed to call here again.”

He was invited to stay for lunch, and during the idle hour in the cool retreat of the patio he talked of his impressions of the wonders and beauties of the ancient Spanish capital.

“I have left my companions still mining in the cathedral,” he said. “We are architects, you know, and they are enthusiastic workers, while I am rather a pleasure-seeker. I confess the cathedral has appealed to me more as a joy than as a thing to be studied.”

“As a monument of antiquity its history is to be studied,” said Fisher. “Founded by Saint Eugenius, first bishop of Toledo, and dedicated to the blessed Virgin Mary in 587. Taken possession of by the Moors when they conquered Toledo, and remaining a mosque for three hundred years! Restored to Christian worship by Alfonsus the Sixth. Rebuilt in

the thirteenth century by Ferdinand the Third. Worked at for forty-nine years by your fellow architect, Pedro Perez, but not finished till after the passing of two hundred and fifty years! You will have seen how, fortunately, all traces of the Moors have not been effaced. The wise rebuilders knew how to value and preserve the exquisite examples of their art that still surprise and charm our eyes encircling the Gothic splendours of the interior."

"How bewitching is their ideal of beauty in decoration!" said Roberts. "My friends simply rave—"

"Will either of them strive to emulate Pedro Perez?" said Fisher, with a smile. "I should say it would be the despair of a young architect to come along by our Toledo."

"Pretty much so," said Roberts. "I expect something good, however, from the youngest of us, a fellow called Kavanagh—"

"An Irishman?"

"We picked him up in County Clare," said Roberts. "Joined us first as a sort of travelling help, but soon outstripped us. His people wanted to make him a stonemason or something, and he ran away."

"That's the man to bet upon!" said Fisher.

When Stine started for home as usual, early in the evening, she left the Fishers and Roberts enjoying the cool air and the enchanting view from the terrace, a wide view of orchards and meadows, and the winding river gleaming from its plunge under the bridge of San Martini; and as she climbed up and down the narrow hilly streets, within the great Gate of the Cambron, she thought of Keefe.

The American's account of his friend reminded her of him and of his ambition.

"Only that his name is Stonewall, and he never was in Ireland, was always a Londoner," she thought, "the description would exactly fit him."

When Roberts joined his friends that night at their inn he displayed his purchase of Stine's little picture with much satisfaction, and was loud in his praises of the Fishers, the works of the artist in his studio, and the *ménage* at the Puerta del Cambron.

"You missed a great deal by refusing to come with me," he said. "It would have been worth all the trouble if only to see the charming face of the young painter of this little picture, a pupil of Fisher's and a picture in herself.

"A Spaniard?" said Castellan.

"I think not, for her name is Rosethorne, though she is somewhat of that character—more like, perhaps, a half-Spanish type we saw in Ireland, dark and bright, but with fresher colouring."

"Well, if you had given us a few more days—" said Castellan.

"Too late!" said Roberts. "We must be on the move by to-morrow evening."

CHAPTER XXVI

Mademoiselle Mathilde

MATHILDE'S education had been progressing rapidly under the direction of Mrs. Petworth, an education naturally resulting from sightseeing and talking with a well-informed companion over all that was to be seen.

She had laid up quite a store of information to be used as the future required, and had profited in more personal matters by her intercourse with a woman of exceptional refinement.

So pleasing had she made herself to her hostess that Mrs. Petworth felt regretful when a letter from Vienna announced the approaching arrival of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick in Paris.

"I had no idea we should have been delayed here so long," said the letter, "but we are coming at last. From what you tell me your Mademoiselle Mathilde will probably suit me. I am sure you would not have made a companion of her for so long if you had not found her agreeable and intelligent."

Lord Patrick Fitzpatrick was a younger son of the Earl of Westhungerland. His was a very ancient Irish title, with but little of worldly possessions attached to it. Lord Patrick was the cleverest member of his

family, and had pushed his way to a high post in the diplomatic service. As they had no children, his wife was the more at liberty to devote herself completely to the duties of her position, living in a whirl of brilliant society and looked on as a particularly attractive hostess.

A splendid official residence was now to be the home of the Fitzpatricks in Paris, and here the shrinking but triumphant Mattie was presented by Mrs. Petworth to her future patroness.

They were received in an apartment which seemed all made of gilding and mirrors, where lights were reflected by a glittering floor and where the few shadows of a dazzling interior were hustled away ignominiously into the corners.

Lady Patrick, in green velvet and emeralds (dressed for an impending function), received the girl with much sweetness, gave her some curios to examine, and then devoted herself to conversation with her friend.

After a short visit Mrs. Petworth departed, and Mademoiselle Mathilde was handed over to a smart *femme de chambre*, whose instructions were to convey the young lady to her own apartments.

The Maison St. Celestin had once been the private residence of a royal princess, and was noble in its ancient design and exquisite in its more modern appointments. Mattie looked round in amazement at the suite of rooms assigned to her particular use, but was careful to preserve her dignity in presence of the maid who waited on her, and to repress all expression of her delight and admiration until she found herself alone.

Then she walked about the rooms on tiptoe, gazing at all the beautiful and rare things that surrounded her, and even touching them to make sure they were real. Mrs. Petworth's charming and tasteful apartments were poor, she thought, compared with all this antique splendour. How wonderful must this palace be, as a whole, seeing that such a part of it had been relegated to her, who was only the secretary or amanuensis of its present mistress?

To be in harmony with such splendour she assumed her finest evening dress, and now sat in an antique gilded chair, waiting to be summoned to dine in a hall where kings had dined; for the princess whose favourite home this house had been, was, of course, the daughter of some of the early kings of France whose names Mattie had forgotten. She was disappointed at finding that she was to dine alone in a little *cabinet* belonging to her own suite of apartments, but consoled herself by remembering that Lady Patrick was dining out, and was further comforted by her enjoyment of the excellent fare set before her.

Afterwards she arranged and rearranged her own little possessions in the beautiful antique commodes and wardrobes. The box containing the precious necklace was changed from one charming repository to another, and finally consigned to a drawer with exquisite workmanship of metal about its handles and keyhole, and with a key of a design at once beautiful and fantastic.

She reflected that the pearls were certainly suitably lodged at last, and that one might imagine them a relic of the princess whose jewels had no doubt once upon a time reposed in this receptacle.

Dwelling upon all this, Mattie unlocked the drawer again and opened the box, just to take another look at the necklace, which she was beginning, almost unconsciously, to look on as a possession of her own.

She took it out of the box and carried it to the tall mirror, which was lighted by wax candles in branches at either side, and here she stood with the necklace in her hand, imagining herself the princess who had enjoyed the right to wear such jewels. It was a pleasant play, and to prolong the pleasure she clasped the necklace round her neck, and continued to stand between the lights, gazing at herself in the mirror.

Her own fair face and lissom figure seemed to declare her a fit person to play the part of the princess, and she stood there dreaming herself into the character till something uncanny seemed to get into the air, and she started, fancying she saw another face looking over her shoulder. Then she unclasped the necklace hastily and removed it as if it had hurt her, packed it quickly back into its box, and locked it up, all just in time to hide it from the maid, who returned to attend to her requirements for the night.

It had been only childish play, and yet somehow Mattie's ambitious aspirations seemed to have been curiously stimulated by her impersonation of the princess who had inhabited her apartments. An enchanting sensation of princesshood in disguise surrounded her like a faery atmosphere from this moment of her first entrance into the *Maison St. Celestin*, and though she was now fully aware that it was merely an emanation of her own vanity, yet she made no effort to dissipate it, enjoying it as

another might the sunshine or moonlight, or the scent of flowers, or the rapture of music.

No one who saw her demure appearance in Lady Patrick's boudoir the next morning could have imagined her subject to such fancies, and to her new employer she seemed the incarnation of maidenly common sense and engaging simplicity. Her readiness to set to work on the papers put before her and her intelligent apprehension of what was required of her with regard to them were exceedingly pleasing to the quick-witted and busy lady, who was at once generous in her dealings and judgments and apt to be a little impatient of dullness and delays.

Mattie, who was thoroughly aware of her own fitness for the post she had undertaken, and of the value of her services to such a person as her new employer, concentrated all her energies on the work put before her, with the happiest results. The warmhearted and impulsive Lady Patrick was surprised and delighted to find in her new secretary not only an attractive companion but an assistant whose efficiency was far beyond that of any other of her experience. Mattie's busy morning work, which was always found satisfactory, her *tête-à-tête* dinners with Lady Patrick when the lady was tired of society and desired a quiet evening with a single companion, the drives into the suburbs to see beautiful and famous places, all continued her education and the social training which she had always coveted, her wary consciousness of danger through so much petting always saving her from making mistakes.

In the early autumn she accompanied Lady Patrick on a visit of some weeks to the charming country

château of a friend, where she was freely admitted to a society of which she had hitherto had only glimpses.

During this visit she was very happy and had forgotten all her cares. She basked in the warmth of general approbation, and what with her contented state of mind and the fresh country air she gained in health and beauty to an extent that surprised and delighted her friends and patrons. Stine and Fandango were creatures of the past who had ceased to haunt her dreams. Even the pearl necklace was forgotten. At that present moment she seemed to have arrived at the summit of her ambition—to have gained a place among the great ones of the earth; and she felt assured that her good fortune would carry her still farther, and give her a permanent foothold in the world of her desires.

In this happy frame of mind she returned to the Maison St. Celestin to begin a winter of closer attention to work, with less of the delightful varieties which had alternated with it at the château of the Marquise. Lady Patrick was now more deeply plunged in social duties, and was scarcely seen for days together by her secretary.

Then Mattie's great splendid apartments grew sombre and lonely, and the ghost of the princess of old who had lived in them began to haunt them to her imagination, looked over her shoulder in the wonderful antique mirrors, sat in all the vacant chairs by turns, and sometimes sighed in her ears as if complaining of the presence of a usurper.

She dined once more alone in her *cabinet*, and was thrown upon reading to pass her weary evening

hours. The books supplied her by a circulating library were of a class rather to irritate than console her, stimulating her ambition and arousing discontent. She felt herself a heroine without a proper stage for her movements, ill-used by those who had petted her up to a certain point and now neglected her and threw her back on disappointment and solitude. There was no returning to her early state of satisfaction with her position in the *Maison St. Celestin*. Then she had been happy because her foot was on the first rung of the social ladder; now she felt that she had been very near the top and had come down again.

Through fretting over these thoughts Mattie soon lost the bloom and roundness of cheek which she had gained during the weeks of her holiday in the country, and she was quick to perceive that her beauty had suffered.

Her health was, however, really good enough, and nobody took any notice of her pale face or her airs of self-pity. Everyone was too busy to observe her closely.

“I suppose I am getting old,” she said to herself, “and that I shall never be anything better after all than a poor hack scribbler!”

CHAPTER XXVII

The Beginning of Trouble

AN important and unexpected change was at hand, however. One day Mattie was sent for in haste by Lady Patrick, from whom she had been feeling quite estranged, so little had she spoken to her of late. Half an hour occasionally for the dispatch of social notes had covered all her intercourse with the lady who had formerly required her companionship for a considerable part of every day.

The matter of the summons was soon explained. A small but important dinner party had been arranged for that evening. A guest had sent an apology on account of sudden illness, leaving the impossible number of thirteen to sit down to table, and Mademoiselle Mathilde was bidden to array herself in her best evening frock to fill the vacant place, averting the probable distress of the superstitious who might be present.

“Of course it is nonsense,” said Lady Patrick, “and one ought not to notice it, but after all one would not run the risk of making one’s guests uncomfortable. I am not sure that you have a dress quite good enough for the occasion; but as it is too late for any other arrangement, we shall have to make the best of it.”

220 The Daughter in Possession

This was indeed a new and exciting experience for Mattie. She had never before been bidden to one of the formal dinners given by Lord and Lady Fitzpatrick, and the event was all the more startling arriving as it did just at this period, when dullness and stagnation seemed to be all that she could look forward to for the remainder of her life.

She hurried to her room to review her store of evening dresses, of which, thanks to Lady Patrick, she had a pretty collection. With good taste she made choice of a simple white one, which was the freshest if not the handsomest, and was, besides, particularly becoming to her.

She dressed early, and having dismissed the maid who arranged her hair, she sat down to wait in the chair she had sat on the first evening of her arrival in the Maison St. Celestin, and which she had ever since thought of as the princess's chair. Sitting there, reflecting on this new great experience that was fast approaching, her old ambitious imaginings rose to high tide, and she began to feel again like the princess who had gone forth every evening from these apartments, perhaps out of this very chair, to dine with her royal equals at the King's table.

"Was she prettier than I am?" thought Mattie. "Was she as clever in managing her affairs? What did she wear, I wonder? Jewels, of course. I have no jewels. Except the necklace! What a pity I cannot wear that necklace!"

The idea then occurred to her that she might put on the necklace, just for a few minutes, and see how it would look on her neck, what change it would make in her appearance. There was plenty of time.

She unlocked the drawer and the box, and drew forth the pearls from their wrappings.

After all, they were not so very wonderful. They had certainly a soft sweet lustre; and how they did enhance her own fair looks and enrich the white simplicity of her dress! Wearing them she looked a new creature, and yet there was nothing startling or resplendent about the necklace. After all, might she not venture to wear it for once without risk of its attracting too much attention?

After a long study of herself and the pearls in her mirror, she sat down again in the princess's chair to think the matter out. Many minutes passed and she had not made up her mind. Her vanity urged her to wear the pearls, her prudence cautioned her to restore them to their hiding place at once. So long did she waver from one to the other of these counsellors that she lost count of the time, and suddenly saw by the old gilt clock, standing on a rare cabinet, that the moment had arrived when she ought to be in the drawing-room, and in her place beside Lady Patrick.

She started up in a fright and tried to take the necklace off, deciding in haste that prudence was the better adviser. Her fingers trembled with nervous alarm, and somehow the clasp refused to be undone. After an impatient struggle, which only made matters worse, she gave another glance at the clock and saw that she could delay no longer. Quickly realizing that to be late for dinner on such an occasion would be a greater mistake than to wear the necklace, she gave up the attempt to take it off and hastened to the drawing-room.

She was just in time to enter with the earliest of the guests and to find a retired seat, where she gradually regained her composure of mind and gave her attention to the courteous remarks of a nice old gentleman who was introduced to her as her companion at the dinner table. Between trying to make herself agreeable in return for his civilities, and eagerly taking in the splendours of a more brilliant company than she had ever before made a part of, she forgot all about the necklace and began to enjoy herself thoroughly.

Before long she became aware that interested glances were turned towards her at intervals from different pairs of eyes at the table. She thought she imagined it at first, but as the dinner proceeded she could not but perceive that she was a little under special notice, particularly from the ladies of the company. A feeling of great surprise and elation gradually took possession of her. Vanity suggested that her personal attractions were even greater than her humility had ever allowed her to suppose. Certainly she was getting on very well with her nice old Frenchman, whose courtesy complimented her on her perfect French and who encouraged her to chat to him more freely than she had ever felt willing to do with anyone who was quite a stranger to her.

A pleasant thought of the approbation of Lady Patrick, who would be gratified at her success on this accidental occasion, flitted across her mind and caused her to turn her eyes in the direction of the hostess.

She was startled by meeting Lady Patrick's eyes bent on her with a look which for a moment she

could not understand. Had she done anything wrong, made some flagrant mistake at the table which caused her friend and patroness to bend that puzzled, disapproving, questioning gaze on her? What had she been saying? What could it mean? Had there been anything ill-bred in her manner towards her ancient cavalier, whom she had tried to please, and who had seemed to behave so nicely to her?

Venturing another glance at Lady Patrick, she again saw that she was under very particular and unusual notice. This time the lady appeared to be looking at her neck rather than at her face, and the conviction flashed on her that the pearl necklace and not herself had been the object of attention from the guests as well as from the hostess at the table.

With a sickening sensation of having made a terrible blunder, and of things being all wrong in consequence, Mattie dropped her eyes and became silent for the rest of the evening. Her amiable old neighbour concluded she was tired of him, and turned his polite attention to the lady on his other side, leaving Mattie to her own reflections, which were anything but comforting. When dinner was over she was glad to remember that Lady Patrick had told her she need not appear in the drawing-room after making herself useful at table as required, though she might come if she particularly wished it. She certainly did not wish it now, her only desire being to escape as soon as possible to her own apartments.

Arrived there, she went straight to the long mirror to look at herself again and to examine into the effect

of the necklace on her neck, to assure herself whether or not the pearls could have attracted extraordinary attention in a company where jewels were plentiful. Certainly the necklace was beautiful, was exquisite; but, remembering the gems of many shapes and colours that had flashed in her eyes round the table, she found it difficult to believe that these particular jewels had been so extremely remarkable.

For some time past she had almost forgotten the pearls and their history. Her wish to hold them as long as possible, her unwillingness to meet Stine and hand them over to her, had been lessened by her increasing faith in her own power to make friends and her satisfaction with her present life and flattering prospects. Even her late fit of depression had not led her to think of them as a possible means of gaining independence. Yet she had been silently keeping the necklace as her own, property which she had been assured was worth ten thousand pounds. And now, perhaps, she might be called on to account for it.

It mattered little that the notice of strangers had been attracted by the beauty of the pearls; but she could not forget the peculiar expression of Lady Patrick's eyes, fixed not so much on her face as on her throat. She felt sure that questioning and explanation must follow that meaning gaze, and she grew sick with nervousness as she tried to think of how she was to account for her possession of the necklace without showing herself to be less straightforward and ingenuous than she had intended to appear.

With some difficulty she unfastened the clasp that had baffled her efforts at an unfortunate moment,

and replaced the necklace in its nest in the box, at the same time taking out the paper on which her father's statement was written and reading it over carefully.

There was the whole story, told in a few words, accounting for her possession of the pearls; and if pressed hard she would have to tell the truth and produce the paper. But then, how could she account for her concealment of it, and her silence on the subject to the friends who had proved themselves worthy of her confidence, and who might, and certainly would, have interested themselves in the search for Stine?

She could not deny to her own intelligence that so far from searching for Stine she had dreaded her reappearance; and how could she persuade others now that in so acting she had not absolutely intended to be dishonest? Even if they acquitted her of positively bad intentions, how would they be induced to look at her conduct in a light which failed even her own eyes when the naked truth was put before her?

What story could she invent in her defence—of efforts baffled, of advertisements circulated about the world and never answered, of great anxiety to find Stine, and of the forgetfulness of the whole thing which of late had befallen her? Would they believe her? She had never yet stooped to put a lie into words, but now a mere passive failure from truth would no longer avail her.

She must invent many plausible excuses for her conduct in withholding important matters from her friends while assuming airs of confidence in their

sympathy. Could she do this and bear a searching cross-examination? The only excuse she could think of was that of pleading ignorance of the value of the pearls. No one could tell that she went to a jeweller's in London and informed herself on that point.

And then, how was she to be sure that the jeweller had not blundered? Were the pearls really as valuable as he had said they were? After all, she was really in a state of ignorance concerning them.

She went to bed with burning cheeks and aching head, and her only comforting thought before she slept was of the possibility that Lady Patrick might not take the matter seriously, and perhaps might not question her about it at all.

CHAPTER XXVIII

War with Conscience

WHEN Mattie opened her eyes in the morning she rose quickly, expecting an early summons, although hoping for once that Lady Patrick would be too busy to think of her, having several important engagements for that day. But the hope was vain, for she was hardly dressed and ready to appear when the summons came.

Trembling with the uncertainty of what awaited her, she made her way to the boudoir in which, till now, she had never spent any but very happy hours. The first glance at Lady Patrick's face as she entered told her that trouble was in store for her. Yet that face was scarcely less kind than usual, only exceedingly serious.

"No, my dear," she said, "I have no particular work for you this morning. I want to ask you a question or two about something I noticed last night."

She paused, and Mattie said hurriedly:

"I tried to behave as nicely as I could. I hope you were not displeased with me."

"No, I saw nothing wrong, only something that surprised me. You were wearing a very remarkable jewel, a necklace of costly pearls——"

"My necklace!" said Mattie. "Is it so very valuable?"

"I am extremely puzzled," said Lady Patrick. "The necklace is not only valuable but extraordinarily beautiful. It attracted the notice of my guests, who asked me questions about it which I was unable to answer. You must tell me all about it now, for I am at a loss to imagine how a girl in your position came to be possessed of such a jewel."

Mattie had turned red and pale, and began to feel faint from confusion and anxiety. She tried to speak, but stammered, and remained silent. Her presence of mind had deserted her. The old instinct for caution chained her tongue. If she must tell the truth, how was she to make a beginning of it? She clung to the idea that she need not unnecessarily compromise herself.

"Speak out, Mathilde," said Lady Patrick. "Do not be afraid. Is there a mystery, a story attaching to it?"

"Mystery—no, a story—yes," said Mattie, finding her voice.

"I thought so, my dear; and now you will tell me the story. I can give you half an hour. You will not wonder that I am anxious to know how you came by the pearls, and why you never spoke of them—"

"I will tell you," gasped Mattie; "but it is a long story—will take more than half an hour."

"Give me an outline," said Lady Patrick encouragingly. "We can return to it afterwards."

"I will try. My father was a sailor. On his last voyage there was a shipwreck. He was the only person saved except a baby—he rescued the child

from drowning, and brought her home to his wife. They adopted her as their own."

"Yes?" said Lady Patrick, with earnest eyes fixed on the girl.

"Soon afterwards the sailor who had saved the child and adopted her became paralysed. His head was affected, and he talked strangely sometimes, when he would hint at having a secret. He spent his last years in a hospital for incurables, where he was kindly treated. The girl remained with his wife, and was counted in among his own children."

Mattie paused here and gasped again. She wanted a little time to arrange her story as well as she could, but was feeling bewildered, as not knowing where her tongue was threatening to carry her. To tell the truth, but at the same time to put her own conduct in a noble if not heroic light, was her intention; but there were pitfalls of possible blunder on every side of her.

"Go on, my dear," said Lady Patrick, with a glance at her watch.

"The sailor died in hospital when the girl was just grown up. His wife and two boys had died before him. When he was dead, it was found that the secret he had raved about was the existence of a pearl necklace, which had been on the neck of the baby when he rescued her. He had not intended to tell anyone, lest the pearls should be sold by his wife in her poverty. He meant to keep them for the girl, to give to her as soon as she could be trusted with them. When he was dead they were found hidden in the lining of an old coat, which he had begged to be allowed to keep always beside him."

Lady Patrick was listening with a strange look in her eyes, and her face had grown a little pale.

"It sounds like a bit of a newspaper story," she said. "For one thing, it strikes me that patients in hospitals are not allowed to keep their own clothes, or anything of the kind."

"It was not an ordinary hospital," said Mattie; "it was rather a home, and the nurse was kind. I know it sounds like a story. May I bring you the necklace, and with it the statement of how it was found?"

"Do so," said Lady Patrick; and Mattie fled to her own apartments and back again with the box containing the necklace.

Lady Patrick took one long look at the pearls and replaced them in the box. Then she took the bit of yellow paper and read the crude statement of poor old Milsom.

"The people at the home can verify all I have told you," said Mattie.

"True; but I am not anxious to doubt you, child. And so the pearls fell to you as a dower, of the value of which you probably had no idea."

"After my father's death——" stammered Mattie.

"Your reputed father," corrected Lady Patrick.

In her confusion Mattie did not for the moment see the all-important point in the story made by the word "reputed". She saw later that this had been the moment to save the story from drifting towards the lines of falsehood. Had she cried out: "He was really my father; there is another history which concerns the child he saved", all would have gone well, and Mattie would have been delivered from the

snare set for her by her more ignoble self. But she let the opportunity pass.

She sat silent with cold hands clasped and eyes on the floor, wondering how many more questions she would be asked, and what would be the fate of the necklace. She wanted time to think of how to tell the sequel of the story as regarded Stine. The half-hour, all the time granted her for the first part of her confidence, had expired, and still Lady Patrick sat lost in reflection, her cheek on her hand, and had not dismissed her.

At last the lady roused herself and said:

“My dear, I must go now. You will leave the necklace and the paper in my care. I will follow your suggestion of writing to the hospital. This is a very important matter. I must ask you to give me the address.”

Mattie gave the address and was released.

Returned to her solitude, she sat down to review all that had been said during the interview with her friend and to consider her position. The whole story had not yet been told, and she knew that the difficult part was to come. What would Lady Patrick think of her silence and reticence, seeing that she had made no efforts to discover Stine and hand her over the property belonging to her? How could she account for her secrecy and delay? Looking it all in the face now, she could not account for them to herself. She had borne a grudge to Stine for having been doubly fortunate while she had been left uncared and unprovided for, and she had been vaguely conscious of a latent desire to hold this treasure, of which she knew the value, as long as it was possible to do so. She had

never yet told any lies in words, and could she now invent tales of attempts to find the girl she knew to be the owner of the pearls? Would it even be safe to invent them, as cross-examination on ways and means would be sure to convict her of untruth?

Oh, how mad she had been to wear the necklace! If it had never left its box the pleasantness of life that had come to her lately would not now have been disturbed, and she need not have been living with the fear of she knew not what hanging over her. Her confidence in her own prudence and cleverness was destroyed, her sense of independence and her belief in herself as sufficient to be her own counsellor were shaken. For the first time in her life she acknowledged that she had been foolish and cowardly.

She had to admit that even if she had not worn the necklace but had kept it still as a secret possession, one day, sooner or later, unless she intended to be a thief, the story of its ownership would have had to be told, and the pearls would have come to light. By yielding to her secret covetousness, her desire to withhold the pearls from Stine, even with the intention of ultimately giving them to her, she had been storing up difficulties for herself which had been increasing the longer she persisted in her reticence.

Brooding long over the matter, she made up her mind at last that she would simply say she had never been able to hear anything of Stine, or of the great singer who had adopted her. She must also allow it to be supposed that she had been in ignorance of the value of the pearls. She must still cultivate caution and secrecy as much as remained in her power. Her

only hope of retaining the good opinion of high-minded friends such as Lady Patrick and Mrs. Petworth must lie in her successful assumption of airs of stupidity and ignorance.

Some time passed without bringing her any summons from Lady Patrick. She knew that the great lady was busily occupied with social engagements, and as day followed day she began to hope that the whole matter had been dropped, and that Lady Patrick, having carefully locked up the necklace, would never think very much more about it. And yet, it was impossible not to see that if such were the case it would only mean that the inevitable day of reckoning was only deferred, but could never be done away with.

Tormented by these thoughts, Mattie tried to exercise her imagination profitably by inventing plausible reasons for her own conduct, placing her actions and intentions in the most interesting point of view. If she could only be sure that Lady Patrick's sagacity would not prove greater than her own! The lady's face as she listened to her recital came before the girl's mind, her earnest, penetrative glance, her fit of deep reflection when all had been told, the evidently deep interest she had taken in the story. The more she brooded over these particulars the more did Mattie regret that she had not begun the story by introducing Stine at once as the child saved from drowning, and making it clear that she herself was the real child of her father, the sailor who had rescued the baby and who had died in hospital. Sooner or later things would have to be put in their proper places, and by hesitating and reserving as she went along she had

only entangled herself in difficulties that were over and above what was necessary and inevitable.

Sometimes, in her great distress, she wished that Mrs. Petworth had not been absent from Paris, imagining that she would, if it had been possible, have gone to that tried friend, and without waiting longer on Lady Patrick would have told the whole story in a more straightforward way, and appealed to her for help to discover Stine and deliver over the necklace that was her property.

But Mrs. Petworth was not in Paris, and Mattie was obliged to rest on the belief that she should have so acted had it been possible. There was nothing further to be done but to prepare for the next summons that might come from Lady Patrick, and to be patient in the meantime.

CHAPTER XXIX

Deep Waters

LADY PATRICK's silence continued so long that Mattie began to breathe more freely, hoping for she knew not what. But at last the expected summons came, and she rose up in great trepidation to obey it.

As she entered the room she hardly dared to raise her eyes, fearing to meet looks of severe disapprobation, and, in her panic, unable to remember anything she had meant to urge in her own defence. Well aware of how she had laboured to gain a reputation for intelligence, and had proved herself exceptionally clever, it seemed rather a forlorn hope to fall back now on a pretence of stupidity.

Her lonely days and nights of anxiety had weakened her physically, and she was in a low, nervous state when she entered the boudoir, prepared and yet unprepared to meet the inevitable that was awaiting her.

"Come in, my child," said Lady Patrick, in tones so sweet and tender that Mattie started and looked up. This was not the face she had expected to see. Lady Patrick's eyes were full of tears, her lips quivering. She came forward hurriedly to meet the girl, caught her in her arms and held her close to her heart,

"Not Mathilde," she said, with a little sob and laugh, "but Katreen, my little Katreen, my sister's child!"

Mattie shook in her embrace, and tried to gasp out a word.

"No, don't faint, darling. Come here and sit by me and let me tell you all about it."

Mattie, completely stunned, sat limp on a couch with Lady Patrick's arm around her and her head on her shoulder.

"You did not notice how I was affected by your story—I could not tell you. I dared not admit even to myself the thoughts—the conviction almost—that were forced on me. Until I wrote to the home in London, and had every word you told me verified, I would not acknowledge to my own longing desire that something like a miracle had happened."

Mattie struggled to lift her head and speak, but again was urged to keep quiet.

"Only this morning the satisfactory reply to all my questions arrived. It was all true—the aged sailor's death, his attachment to the old coat, your carrying it away as a relic after his death, the knowledge of many people that he had saved an infant from drowning, and brought her up as his own child. Then his lingering in the home long after the death of his wife and sons, no one remaining to care for him but the girl of his charity."

"But, Lady Patrick!—" moaned Mattie.

"Yes, my love, I know. You want more evidence. So might I, only for this blessed necklace! You told me your side of the story, my little Katreen, and now I must tell you mine."

Mattie was dumb, and listened.

"I had a sister, a year older than myself. We loved each other intensely, and had never been parted till she married and went away with her husband to India, where he held an important post. My father and I missed her sadly, but we were looking forward to her return with her husband and infant girl, full of joyful expectation, when news came that their vessel was a total wreck, and all hands lost. My father died of shock and grief, and after his death I was too lonely and unhappy to stay in the old home, and I came to Paris to be with Mrs. Petworth. I was engaged to be married, and after an interval of mourning I was married from her house.

"Now, my love, I know that my sister's baby was rescued, and has been brought up by the good man who saved her. The date of the wreck, the name of the vessel, all point to it, and the wonderful necklace has proved it. My sister had written to me that she was bringing such a necklace. I will show you her letter, which I have treasured, and which I re-read on the evening of the day when you told me your story. You left the necklace. I examined it at leisure, and I found that it exactly corresponded with Katreen's description of the necklace she was bringing.

"Here is what she says: 'We have turned a large sum of money, intended for our daughter's dowry, into a wonderful necklace of pearls, and Baby herself is carrying the treasure round her neck. We think it is a safe and easy way to transport the money, and my husband is pleased, as he has a particular fancy for Oriental pearls. The clasp is a peculiar one and very

safe, and is not always easy to unfasten. On the gold in the centre of it are Baby's initials.'

"You have not noticed them, I am sure, but they are there, making our chain of evidence perfect," said Lady Patrick; and she paused and kissed the pale face on her shoulder.

Mattie felt tears on her cheek, and tried again to raise her head and speak; but some heavy weight seemed to press on her brain and crush her heart. With a desperate consciousness that she must check the falsehood before it could run any farther, she suddenly stood up and gave a bitter cry.

"I can't! I can't!" were all the words that would come. The room whirled round, and she threw out her arms and fell on the floor.

"Poor child! She has fainted. The shock has been too much for her," said Lady Patrick, in tears.

Bells were rung, servants came, and Mattie was restored to consciousness and carried to her bed.

Lady Patrick's physician, a friend, and one in whom she had special confidence, was summoned, and in her great joy and agitation she informed him of her discovery, and of the shock that had been the cause of the girl's illness.

"It is quite natural," said the doctor. "No wonder a young creature of sensitive nature should be so overcome. But with care she will recover quickly. The happy change in her condition will soon give her an increase of health and strength. Keep her very quiet; don't let her talk or get excited."

Mattie, lying with closed eyes, in a state of exhaustion, and feeling ill indeed, heard this low-toned conversation, and wondered vaguely how she was to

extricate herself from this net of misunderstanding in which her disingenuousness and long habit of secrecy and overcaution had suddenly entangled her.

Her illness and enforced silence gave her a sort of refuge for the hour. It would be time enough to speak when allowed by the doctor, and meanwhile she must try to think of what she was to say when undeceiving Lady Patrick, who now hovered round her with motherly tenderness.

She was relieved when Lady Patrick was obliged to leave her to fulfil some important evening engagement, and still more when, seeming to sleep, she was left by the nurse attending her, who was to sleep in an adjoining chamber. Finding herself at last alone, she ventured to open her eyes and look round by the thin ray of a night light on the room where she had lived contentedly for so many weeks, and which was now changed into a place unrecognizable, the chamber of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick's wonderfully discovered and dearly prized niece, the apartment of the fortunate successor to that splendid princess of old whom she had so envied.

Yes, that was the amazing, incredible fact. An accident, a blunder which she had never expected to make, had suddenly lifted her into a position altogether beyond her wildest dreams. She had jested with Sib Stonewall, saying that a mistake might have been, and that she, Mattie, was probably the rescued child, while Stine was really the daughter of the Milsoms. Now this fancy seemed to have been changed to fact without any effort on her part. Might she not allow herself, for a moment, to imagine this glorious transformation an actual reality? Here, alone, in the quiet

hours of the night, it could harm no one if she looked at herself in the character of the loved and cherished child of Lady Patrick's idolized sister, the adopted daughter and heiress of a noble house, on whom all that affection and prosperity can bestow was now to be poured out. And this while she was young and fair, and thoroughly fitted for the enjoyment of such good fortune.

Of course, as soon as daylight should appear, she must banish these thoughts and consider how she was to confess the truth and set the blunder right. Her head spun round as she looked the difficulty in the face and shuddered at it. As the hours passed she became every moment more restless and feverish. Her mind was growing distracted between the temptation to let the present state of things go on, the fear of disgraceful discovery, and the strictures of her conscience. When morning brought the nurse and Lady Patrick and the doctor round her bed she was found to be ill of a nervous fever, and so Nature took the matter in her own hands and granted her a respite.

There was no pretence about her illness. She was really in a fever. At times she was delirious, and spoke words of fear and anxiety that made Lady Patrick weep, though they aroused no suspicion in her mind. How this poor child had been tossed about, and how brave she had been! thought the warm-hearted woman as she watched beside her. How sweet it would be to make amends to this darling for all she had suffered, to gather her up and take her to her inmost heart, as her own daughter, her sister's child, her father's only grandchild!

The doctor assured her that the young patient's life



was not in danger. She had been "run down", and the shock had been too much for her. After the illness her nerves would be in a weak state. She would require care and amusement to restore the natural balance of her delicate brain. She must not be encouraged to think too much, or reflect at all on the past. When she was older, and her constitution more formed and strengthened, she might then safely go back on her early days, and satisfy the affectionate solicitude of her aunt by relating all the particulars of her childhood's experiences. But meanwhile everything must be done to keep her mind occupied with pleasant things, comforts for the body and charming distractions for the imagination to work upon.

When the crisis passed, and Mattie was once more alive to a good deal that was going on around her, she became quickly aware of all these generous intentions with regard to her. She realized that it would require an enormous effort to break through the wall of loving care that was to be built round her, and she felt too weak in mind and body even to think of such an effort. It was delightful to drift on, feeling herself the object of such loving solicitude. The day of reckoning was evidently still a good way distant—if indeed there must be a day of reckoning.

The chief occupation of her mind in silent hours was now a reviewing of her whole situation. The thought kept recurring: might she not really be Stine after all, and Stine, wherever she was, the sailor Mil-som's daughter? How could Lady Patrick be so sure of her if she had not seen some likeness to her own family? Lady Patrick was of a fair complexion, with bright, almost golden hair, and so was she, Mattie.

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Stine was dark. Was not this of itself a kind of evidence? When the force of this suggestion failed, another was ready to spring up in support of her ambitious desires, which were again growing up, stronger than ever, within her.

Where was Stine? Was she still alive? What had become of Fandango? If living, surely something would be heard of the singer of world-wide fame. He was dead; and Stine, his heiress, was probably married to some Eastern magnate, in no need of relatives or property, and with no intention or likelihood of returning to England.

With these ideas warring with conscience in her mind (conscience steadily getting the worst of it) Mattie's recovery was slow.

CHAPTER XXX

Falsehood as Truth

As Mattie's strength returned, with it came a keener appreciation of the position into which an accident had lifted her, and more intense relish for the good things dropped by fortune into her lap. Her old ambitious dreams and longings had been realized and fulfilled beyond all imagination. It became every day more evident to her that she could not destroy the wonderful state of happiness into which she had been ordered, could not cast herself down from the high place to which she had been raised as if by magic. As days lengthened into weeks, and her power of enjoyment was increased by indulgence, determination to enjoy her life shut the door of her will in the face of conscience, and left her in triumphant possession of what she no longer acknowledged to herself was the rightful possession of another.

It has often been said that if a falsehood is dwelt upon long enough—continually regarded as truth—it will come in time to appear as truth in the eyes that are interested in so regarding it.

When allowing herself to reflect at all, she perceived first, that no one in the world could challenge her position except Sib Stonewall and Sib's step-nephew, Keefe Stonewall, neither of whom she was

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likely ever to come across in future. As Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick's niece it was most improbable that she should ever meet them again. And if she did, how could they be sure that her father had not confessed to her just before he died that she was the rescued child, and that Stine was his daughter? Would not that supposition agree with her legacy from him of the necklace, and her possession of a paper stating the fact of his rescue of the infant, no names being mentioned?

At this point conscience would speak out, and to silence it Mattie's powers of invention would go even more vigorously to work. Was it not, after all, likely enough that the exchange of children had been made, seeing that she, Mattie, was declared by many friends to resemble Lady Patrick so remarkably that she would be easily recognizable anywhere as her relative? Of Stine, with her dark complexion, that never could have been said. Yes, she, Mattie, was really Katreen St. Hilary, the child of Lady Patrick's sister who was drowned, and Katreen St. Hilary she was resolved to remain. Stine was the daughter of the Milsoms, wonderfully fortunate in having been adopted as the child and heiress of the wealthy singer, and in no need of any further bounties from fortune. Mattie did not now speak to herself of Providence, but of Fortune. For at this point she had left off saying her prayers, and no longer called on God to keep her out of temptation.

Truly life had become delightful to her. The princess reigned once more in the charming old apartments that had been occupied for a time by the industrious and ambitious and lowly-born girl named

Mathilde, whose place as amanuensis was now filled by another and less interesting young woman. She had been welcomed and admired and fêted by Lady Patrick's brilliant circle of friends, and had dropped with surprising ease into the ways and manners of the people among whom she found herself moving. There was not a single cloud on her sunshine. The warm-hearted "aunt" lavished the most tender affection on her, and Lord Patrick himself made her feel how glad he was that his wife, who had longed for children, had now got a daughter.

Mattie had already seen something of Paris from historic and artistic points of view, thanks to Mrs. Petworth's kindness. Now she was learning it from every interesting aspect, and experiencing all the charms and fascinations of its most desirable society. But after a round of extraordinary pleasure and gaiety Lady Patrick thought her darling looking a little exhausted, and carried her off to the country château of the friend who had been kind to her when she was only Mademoiselle Mathilde, the secretary, and who was eager now to receive her in her new character.

It was pleasantly exciting to be made the centre of attraction in such an assemblage of distinguished persons as the Marquise had gathered round her, and Mattie felt no nervous fears of detection in such company. She knew that her story was whispered about, with romantic additions supplied by the imagination of people who could not repeat a tale without trying to improve on it. By Lady Patrick's desire she wore the wonderful necklace every evening, and was often called on to take it off her neck for examination of the

initials on the clasp. She was called a lucky girl, a protégée of the fairies. The succession of incidents that had led her into the arms of her mother's sister was declared not alone marvellous but miraculous. She began to hope that the gossip about the wonderful discovery would soon come to an end, lest much talk should one day draw dangerous attention upon her.

"So much notice is a little embarrassing, my love," said Lady Patrick, "but you must take it quietly and it will soon subside."

On this satisfactory assurance Mattie rested, and thoroughly enjoyed all the good things showered on her. She exulted in the belief that her position was unassailable. She perceived that even her appearance was undergoing a change. The pale, rather thin face, with its air of reserve, was now rounded and blooming; the too slim figure had got fuller curves; her eyes seemed to have grown larger, and danced with pleasure; the brightness of her hair, which made it resemble Lady Patrick's hair, was insisted upon, and when fashionably arranged made quite a new framework for her countenance. Then the richness of her dress in itself made a kind of disguise. No, even were she now to encounter any of the old friends who had known her as Mattie Milsom, she felt confident they would never recognize her in Katreen St. Hilary, the daughter of a distinguished family, niece of Lord and Lady Patrick, moving in the best circles of Parisian society.

It was splendid autumn weather, and the woods and gardens of the château were like a paradise, safe from all intrusion of evil or danger. Mattie flitted about

them in the mornings, feeling herself like the heroine of a fairy tale, who had nothing to do but gather flowers, and wear jewels, and find every wish gratified almost before it was formed.

“I have been searching for you everywhere,” said Lady Patrick, meeting her one morning at the end of a lane of the tall brilliant flowers that hold the sun longest in their hearts and are the last to fail of their glory. “I might as well think to overtake a butterfly. I have news for you. Dear Mrs. Petworth has returned to Paris, and is coming here to-morrow to spend a few days.”

“Oh,” said Mattie, “how glad I shall be to see her!” But her heart sank a little—she could not at the moment ask herself why.

“She is bringing a friend who had come to visit her. He was her only difficulty about coming, and he has been invited too. He is an American and a millionaire, has eccentric tastes, we gather, but is a good sort of man and pleasant. The Marquise finds that any friend of Mrs. Petworth must be agreeable, and I hope this young man may prove no exception.”

“All Americans are millionaires, aren’t they?” said Mattie. “I should rather like to see a millionaire.”

Lady Patrick laughed. “You say that rather as the children say: ‘I want to see an elephant.’”

When alone, Mattie bethought her of a reason to account for the slight chill she had felt at hearing of Mrs. Petworth’s expected arrival at the château. She had already received letters of affectionate congratulation from that good friend, and why, she asked herself, should she fear to meet one who of

all people could not have the slightest clue to her antecedents?

She was quite secure. And yet, somehow she chose to meet Mrs. Petworth first of all in the open air, in the garden; not because she felt that she could run away if necessary, but with some impulse towards momentary freedom which she could not have analysed. And in the garden, on the afternoon of an Indian summer's day, she turned the corner of a lane of flowers and saw Mrs. Petworth and her American friend coming towards her.

Mattie was dressed in silvery blue and white, with a sheaf of rich pink carnations at her girdle. Her hair glinted in the sunshine, her fair cheeks reflected the tint of the carnations. She came along, smiling, looking exceedingly pretty and debonair between the planted lanes of the hollyhocks bearing their brilliant bosses of bloom.

“My dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Petworth with hearty delight and admiration, and opened her arms to her, “how well happiness agrees with you!”

Mr. Roberts was presented to Miss St. Hilary, and a saunter in the gardens was prolonged till daylight began to fade. By the time they entered the château, Mattie and the American visitor had engaged in some lively conversation, and had become pleasantly at ease with each other. The pleasure was continued at dinner and through the evening, and Mattie's interest in Americans had evidently developed agreeably. The visit, proposed to last three days, lengthened into a week, and Roberts by that time regretted that it would ever have to come to an end.

Mrs. Petworth looked on not disapprovingly, and smiled at Lady Patrick's slight dissatisfaction.

"It is all very well for you to praise your Mr. Roberts and set forth his advantages," said Lady Patrick, "but I do not see him quite with your eyes. He may be as good as gold, and as rich as Croesus, and as generous as the sun; but I do not find that any American can be suitable for my sister's daughter and the grandchild of Sir Colman O'Doughtery.

Mrs. Petworth smiled.

"Now, Moya, be rational," she said. "I am well aware of the claims of Irish gentry to be considered the salt of the earth. But have you not confided to me your anxiety as to provision for the future of your niece? Noble foreigners, you have said, are all very well, but they are apt to look for great dowry if they marry an English girl."

"Not always," said Lady Patrick. "I admit that, having no children, we have been spending our income freely, and that we are likely to have to continue to do so. Saving for a dowry for my Katreen will be slow work. But do you think I can bear to think of giving my darling away so soon—having only just found her? Don't tell me you have turned into a worldly woman, dear old friend, thinking of nothing but money, for I shall not believe you."

"No, dear! I am thinking of a worthy man and a mutual attachment—in case, of course, that the attachment is found to be a reality. As to money, the advantage in this case is that there would be enough to admit of your Katreen living where and how she might please, and so remaining near you. In case of her choosing some brilliant

penniless title and having to go abroad—even though the great necklace were disposed of to give her its worth as dowry——”

“Oh no, not that!” cried Lady Patrick. “I would sell my own diamonds rather than part with the only relic left to her by her mother.”

“Yes; now you see just what my worldliness amounts to. Quite by accident Arthur Roberts has come on the scene. I saw from the first moment that he had fallen in love with Katreen. I have also noticed that she has sufficient good sense and feeling to appreciate a worthy character like his.”

“How are you assured that he is so very worthy?” said Lady Patrick impatiently.

“I have known him since his boyhood. I knew something of his parents. They left him a huge fortune, and instead of squandering it on pleasure he has employed it well. Generosity is his most striking characteristic. Then he has been clever and energetic in pursuing his profession as an architect, merely because it interests him, and not in order to interfere with men who require to make a career of it. On the contrary, he has devoted himself to helping two other men to carry on their architectural studies on lines that require money, which they did not possess and which he has provided.”

“Then let him go on doing so,” said Lady Patrick. “My girl need not be considered as an object for his benevolence. I hope he intends to go away at the end of the week.”

CHAPTER XXXI

“The Eyes are the Same”

MRS. PETWORTH had said truly that the coming of Roberts was due to a mere accident. The same accident had kept his two companions still in Spain, while he went in haste to Paris in obedience to a summons concerning the business affairs of a friend. The three travellers had agreed to leave Toledo on the morning after the visit of Roberts to Fisher, the artist, but when they had accomplished the first stage of their journey a letter awaiting Roberts altered their plans.

“I shall be absent only a few days,” said Roberts. “Wait for me here. You will make use of the time to finish up your drawings.”

“Let us return to Toledo,” said Keefe. “Time will be more of a boon to us there.”

So Roberts left them for Paris, and Keefe and Castellan went back to their lodging at Toledo.

“What a pity Roberts’s summons had not come a little sooner!” said Castellan. “He might have introduced us to his friend Fisher, the artist, before he left us.”

“Let us walk out in that direction,” said Keefe, “and see the house and the beautiful view and surroundings. Pity it would not be manners to present ourselves unininvited.”

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"We should probably be welcome, but one never knows," said Castellan. "Aaron Fisher is an Englishman. A Frenchman's doors would be open to all-comers interested in art."

They had taken the walk, and sat down by the wayside at a point where they had a distant view of the artist's house. They could see figures on the terrace, and two of them were ladies.

"The artist's wife and the charming pupil, probably," said Castellan. Then they began to talk about their plans for the next day, and having settled that matter they discussed the lasting belief in the tradition of the gold hidden in the river bed that gives its yellow colour to the Tagus. Golden sands or buried treasure, which? Does the majestic stillness, the idle uselessness of the river encircling the ancient capital, spring from enchantment, and do the bewitched waters really cast up gold? Was the excellence and renown of Toledan steel due to the fact that when red-hot it was plunged in a tank full of Tagus water?

While they talked, idly speculating on these questions, and enjoying the lovely ethereal after-sunset light that made magic changes in the landscape, they saw the slight figure of a young girl coming along the path that led in the direction of the house they supposed to be Fisher's. As she walked against the light they marked the grace of her figure and movements. As she drew nearer her face was seen more distinctly, and when she came within a few yards of the men it was fully revealed—a young, richly coloured face, the dark eyes fixed on the distance as if in a dream.

Suddenly, to Castellan's surprise, Keefe rose up

and walked straight to meet the girl, step eager, hat lifted. Castellan saw him stand before her with a strange stare. A few words passed between them; the girl also stared, then made to pass on. Keefe allowed her to pass, and then returned to Castellan and threw himself down beside him.

“What did you mean? You frightened the girl. Was it gentlemanly?”

“I don’t know. I asked her a question. She said, yes, that was the house of Aaron Fisher, the English artist. I did it on impulse, because as she came up she looked so like someone I knew long ago. But the someone was a child.”

“Did you ask her name, seeing you had made so bold?”

“I did not dare. But I want to see her again. She must be living in Toledo.”

“What do you bet that she is not Roberts’s clever young artist returning from her day’s work as pupil in Fisher’s studio?”

“Perhaps so. Even if I were to find her it might mean more trouble for me, and only annoyance for her. You see, five years have gone past since she was a little girl of twelve, and I, a lout of a boy of sixteen, was cut off and forbidden to approach her.”

“You are not sure this is she?”

“How can I be sure? She was small for her age. If this be she, her features have changed, which would be natural. She was a pale, pinched child; this is a blooming young woman. Only the eyes are the same.”

“Was your little girl willing that you should be cut off and forbidden to come near her?”

"No," said Keefe. He saw again the face looking back at him from the railway carriage as Fandango was carrying her off. He saw a tearful face and outstretched hands.

"She looked at you fixedly—I mean this girl. Do you think she would be more likely to know you than you to recognize her, if she were your friend?"

"I was what is called 'a lump of a boy', in workman's dusty clothes. I dare say I also have developed into something different. I don't know what kind of appearance I may present now."

"You are no end of a good-looking gentlemanly fellow," said Castellan. "You must know that well enough, Kavanagh. Excuse plain speaking. Circumstances require it. No flattery intended."

"Thank you, Castellan!"

"What did you mean by saying that it might mean more trouble for you and annoyance for her if you and she were to meet, since in the early time she was not willing to be forbidden your friendship?"

"She allowed the severance. She never wrote to tell me where or how she was. She gave me no clue to find her. She must have acquiesced in the sentence pronounced on me."

Castellan feared to hurt by probing for more information, and Keefe relapsed into silence. And as darkness crept over the city and the stars came out, they continued on their way to their lodgings.

After supper they sat, as was their wont, in the open air on the Zocodover, talking of Cervantes and his wonderful representation of Spanish character, ways, manners, and literature at the end of the sixteenth century.

“We have little opportunity of judging of changes and developments between these days and those when he sat here as we sit now, smiling at the world, and allowing humour and wisdom to masquerade in each other’s clothes and jostle one another in his busy brain.”

“No,” said Keefe, “not much.” He was scanning the lively crowd of folks who were as usual enjoying the starlit evening hour, passing and repassing before the seat where he and his friend were taking the cool air and resting after the fatigues of their day. “There she is again!” he suddenly exclaimed, sitting up and throwing away his cigarette. “Only her back; but I am sure it is she. Walking with a man who looks elderly and infirm, judging by his back.”

“Backs are misleading sometimes,” said Castellan. “Let us go and meet them in the face.”

They stood up.

“When I find a great mistake I shall be the more depressed,” said Keefe.

“If you could not recognize your friend in daylight, how expect to do so now?”

“I shall follow and see where they live,” said Keefe.

“You are a persistent fellow, I know,” said Castellan, as he kept pace with his companion’s hasty steps.

Within a few yards of Fandango’s modest house they stopped, and saw the persons under observation go in. When the door had closed on them Keefe walked up to it, and stared at it, and at the walls and windows.

“Have you a piece of chalk?” asked Castellan.

"The robber in 'Ali Baba' chalk-marked the doors, you know."

Keefe took note of the house, and consented to wait till morning before making an assault upon the door, yielding to Castellan's reminders as to the lateness of the hour, and the peculiar nature of the enquiries he would have to make.

"I only wanted to ask the name of the lady who had entered the house," said Keefe.

"And after the reply?" said Castellan. "What possibilities? Sleep on it, my friend."

Keefe did not exactly sleep on the matter, but next morning he was up early, and as soon as permitted by Castellan, who claimed a friend's right to advise his conduct in this delicate matter, he presented himself at the door of which he had taken such careful note.

"The young lady who lives here?" said the servant, regarding him critically. "She is an English lady—Miss Rosethorne;" and the woman closed the door.

"I do not know the name," said Keefe.

"What ought the name to be?" asked Castellan.

"She had no name," said Keefe. "She was called Milsom."

"No name?"

"She was nobody's daughter, unless——"

He suddenly turned towards the house again, and made a second summons.

"I asked you the name of the young lady," he said to the impatient portress. "What is the name of the gentleman who lives in this house?"

"Oh, that is different! He is the uncle of Miss Rosethorne. His name is Señor Fandango."

CHAPTER XXXII

Out of the Past

“FANDANGO?” said Keefe.

So much had he hoped to hear the name that for a moment it seemed as if some other name might have taken the shape of it in his ears.

“I said ‘Fandango,’ ” insisted the Spanish woman, speaking a word of English here and there, such as she had happened to pick up.

Keefe was silent, with a sense of a sudden overwhelming change in the world of his last five years’ experience.

“Have you a message for him?” asked the woman.

“I want to see him,” said Keefe.

“I am not sure that you can. He is resting in the patio.”

“Is the young lady with him?”

“No. She is away at the Puerta del Cambron. The Señor is alone. He does not see many people.”

“I am an old friend,” said Keefe. “He knew me in England.”

The woman had been observing the visitor, and his manly air and the charm of his ingenuous countenance had begun to appeal to her good nature.

“It might be well that he should see an old friend,”

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she said; "but you must take him by surprise, as he has got a habit of refusing things. Nobody can manage him but the Doncella."

"Mademoiselle Stine?" hazarded Keefe.

"Ah, you know them!" said the Spanish woman. "Please to step in. If you will follow me to the patio you will find the Señor."

Fandango was on his couch in the little green court, with his pipes and books and papers on a table beside him. Already his weakness and indolence had begun to anticipate the hour of rest, and he was half-asleep when the waiting-woman opened the door and announced "a gentleman from England come to see you, Señor".

He started up and saw Keefe standing within a few yards of him.

Pushing back the little cap that he wore on his bald head, he gazed stupidly at the intruder with the look of one just recovering from a swoon.

"Kavanagh!"

He uttered the word in a tone that was almost a shriek.

"That is my name, sir. I did not think you would know me by it——"

"Not know you? The friend of my youth. The best friend I ever had. The only one I ever treated badly. Michael Kavanagh! I heard you were dead. Thank God you are alive, and that I have lived to make amends! But where have you been? You are still young—while I am an old man. Have you been in the other world, where they never grow old; and have you come back to reproach me?"

Keefe's reflection at the moment was: "They never

told me he had lost his mind. That must be the secret of his retirement."

"Not to reproach you, sir; only to see you," said Keefe.

"Why do you call me sir? We were chums, and you are the elder. I had a big success, and I made money, but I lost it all, as I deserved. When I had the money I neglected to pay my debt to you. I thought you were rich, but I heard too late that you had died in poverty. And the son you left to the charity of a cold world? I have never been able to find him."

Keefe said to himself that as he had intruded on a madman he must try to humour and soothe him.

"As my name is Kavanagh, but not Michael, perhaps I may be the son of your friend. My father is long dead, and I may resemble him, Señor."

"Resemble! I should think you did," said Fandango, beginning to recover from his dazed condition and to pull himself together. "Come nearer and let me look at you, boy. If you are not Michael Kavanagh you can be no one but the son I have been in search of. Sit down here beside me, and tell me your history—where and how you have lived; how you have found me out."

Keefe sat down. "I have found you by accident, Señor," he said. "I did not know you were in search of me, or that you had ever known my father."

"Then this is the work of Providence," said Fandango. "I have prayed to be allowed to make restitution. I have put away the money I owed to your father."

Keefe listened, and tried to humour the strange

delusion of this man whose brain had evidently become a wreck. It was clear to him that Fandango had not recognized him as Keefe Stonewall, but only as the son of Michael Kavanagh. His (Keefe's) father's name was Michael Kavanagh. But what had Fandango ever had to do with Michael Kavanagh? Five years ago the face of the big boy whom he had scorned and warned off had not roused memories of any old friend in the world-famed singer, whether of Michael Kavanagh or another. Had he, Keefe, really been changed by Nature's developments, in the course of five years, into a semblance of his own long-dead father, and was the friendship of that father for Fandango a reality of the past, instead of the sudden fancy of a man who had lost his intelligence?

He could not venture to recall Keefe Stonewall the despised and ignored to the memory of this man who claimed and accepted him only as his father's son. He would have done so had he been quite sure the man was sane, but being quite unsure of it he would wait to allow facts to discover themselves gradually.

"I have no recollection of my father," he said. "I was brought up by friends of my mother. If you can tell me anything of my parents I shall be grateful to you."

"When I knew your father first he was about your age and exactly like you. I was a boy with an extraordinary voice who had run away from home and the work that had been marked out for him there. Your father found me in want, and held out a hand to me. He discovered that I possessed a gift in my voice, he enabled me to get a musical education, and he lent me money to start me in a successful career."

"Good!" said Keefe. "I am glad to hear it, Señor."

"Aye, good in him. But there was no return of good from me. When money flowed in on me I enjoyed and amused myself. I made no attempt to pay him back at once. My head was turned with flattery; I was demoralized by selfish pleasure. Then I made a romantic marriage, and continued to live like a prince while my debt remained unpaid. I said to myself that there was time enough before me, that some day I would spend less and save for the payment of my debt. But the day never came. After a few years my wife and child died, and I became more reckless about spending my money, more forgetful of everything but drowning sorrow in gay company and amusement. I was called generous, princely; so-called friends crowded round me. The first thing that recalled me to sober reflection was the news of your father's death. He died in Ireland. I was singing in America. I made enquiries and learned that he had died in poverty. His wife had died before him; they had suffered straits; the failure of a company had ruined them.

"Later on I heard that they had left a young child, a boy. I grieved. Believe me, son of Michael my dead friend, I did truly grieve. I made some efforts to trace the boy, but failed. To drown remorse I flung myself more completely than ever into enjoyment of the world's good things. I tried to do a kindness to another whenever opportunity offered, and continued to hope vaguely that some day Michael's son would be made known to me.

"Then another strange turn of events drew my

best thoughts away into another channel. I met with and adopted a girl who was in the same sad case as Michael's boy, a deserted or lost and forlorn child—'nobody's daughter' she called herself. I made her my own daughter and took her about the world with me, educated her, made friends for her, lavished all the best of my heart upon her, won her daughterly affection, and hoped to provide a fortune for her. I thought I had power to do all this and still to reserve another fortune for Michael's boy, if ever I should find him.

"But then my luck turned, as the world says, or rather Providence gave me a check. I lost my voice, and with it the income I was spending so profusely. My health broke down. The world forgot me when I had no longer power to entertain and charm it. In bitterness of spirit I retired and hid myself from all my old associates, with no comfort but the tender daughterliness of the girl I had adopted.

"But in this obscurity, under this bitter cloud, the sin of my early ingratitude brought me its punishment. Michael and his son, long almost forgotten, became once more living creatures to me; and my protection of a girl who had no claim on me did not excuse my neglect of the boy, who was the real owner of the little fortune I was saving up for her."

"No!" said Keefe.

"Yes," said Fandango. "I have confessed all to her, and she is as anxious now as I am to find Michael Kavanagh's son, and ease my conscience by restoring to him his own, by the payment of my debt to his father."

Keefe was silent, trying to see his way to a clear

conclusion about all these strange statements concerning himself and his father. He had no longer any suspicion that Fandango was insane. It seemed evident that he, Keefe, the son of Michael Kavanagh, was the man whom the singer had been in search of, though he had not been recognized as young Stonewall, the builder's nephew. Stine taking her place in the story fitted it exactly, and her presence there seemed evidence of the other facts.

He asked himself how it would have been if he had always borne his own name, and if, when a boy, he had resembled his father as he did now? For, of course, the likeness must be remarkable which had caused his sudden recognition by one who had been his father's early friend.

To complete a perfect understanding there remained only the necessity for a statement from himself of his identity with Keefe Stonewall, the builder's boy, who had been snubbed and tricked and warned to keep out of the brilliant path in life marked out by the great musical artist for the daughter of his adoption. Something suggested to him that this was not the moment for such a revelation. Fandango was fatigued and agitated, the hour for his usual repose having passed in exciting conversation. Keefe felt eager to get away before Stine's return, anxious that their first meeting should be alone together, rather than in the presence of Fandango. After a good deal more talk he said at last:

"Well, sir, this is all very interesting and wonderful, and there will be much more to tell and to think over. You are overtired and must take your rest. I am staying in Toledo and will come to see you

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again at any time you may summon me. I must go now. The friend with whom I am travelling is waiting for me.'

Very unwillingly Fandango allowed him to go.

"Come to-morrow morning," he said. "I shall have much to say to you."

"And I to say to you," said Keefe.

"You promise to come. Don't give me the slip. Don't let me lose you again."

"I will come, never fear!" said Keefe.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Meeting

WHEN Keefe got outside the house he set his face at once in the direction of the Puerta del Cambron.

He knew that Stine would soon be on her way home from the artist's house, and he would meet her on the path where he had met her before, and this time there would be full recognition, each of the other.

As he threaded the narrow streets he scarcely heard the "clap, clap" of the window shutters opening to the cool air of the evening, or the cry of the muleteers recommending their *agua dolce* to the thirsty. He passed by the gay figures, glad in their release, beginning to people the streets, seeing only a pair of dark, tearful eyes and two small outstretched hands straining towards him out of a railway-carriage window. This vision was crossed by that of a slim, tall, wavy figure flitting through an exquisite evening landscape, looking at him with those same starry eyes, only they were no longer tearful but full of sweet dreams. No hands stretched towards him, no affectionate appeal, no greeting, but the shy gaze of a startled stranger at an intruding stranger.

Was he really on his way to meet the little worshipped friend and helpmate of his sad boyhood, who had clung to him, listened to him, counselled him,

encouraged his ambitious hopes, when to everyone else he was nothing but a builder's drudge? He saw her now, standing at her post, watching for him on the other side of the crossing evening after evening, until that memorable afternoon when another figure crossed their path and snatched her out of his life.

The five last years of his existence had made him unrecognizable by Fandango as Keefe Stonewall the builder's nephew, transforming him into Keefe Kavanagh the son of Michael Kavanagh, gentleman and benefactor of Fandango, the once ungrateful but now grateful singer. Had those years not changed her also into a conventional young lady, who would remember Keefe, the labouring lout in his coarse shoes and dusty jacket, only as one among many rude features of her half-forgotten childhood?

Chilled by these reflections, his eager gaze ahead was sometimes withdrawn from the distance out of which Stine was to appear, his pace was slackened, and his eyes were cast on the ground. He had nearly reached the spot where he had met her before, and still she had not appeared. Could she have gone round by some other way, she who would know all the ways which he did not know, and was he not to see her till introduced to her by Fandango, not as the Keefe of her childhood, but as the neglected, long-sought-for Michael Kavanagh's son?

Lost in these thoughts, he suddenly saw the slim figure he had been watching to see, as it turned a winding of the road and came towards him.

Nearer they came to each other. She did not seem to see him. A few rapid steps and he stood in front of her, barring her way.

"Stine, don't you know me? Say you have not forgotten me!"

"Who is it? Tell me at once that you are Keefe! You must be Keefe!"

Hands were locked in hands.

"Am I so changed?" said Keefe. "The day before yesterday you did not know me."

"You stared at me and went away. I should have known you in another minute."

"I was not quite sure it was you."

"Then I suppose I am changed also."

"The passing of five years has altered us both. How could it be otherwise? Yet I should have known you anywhere by your eyes."

"And you! Now that I can look at you well I see that you are not so much changed. You are tall, and your features have lengthened; but your forehead and eyes and mouth are the same. And your voice. But, Keefe, what have you been doing with yourself? You are what I always knew you would be, a gentleman."

"I have been educating myself and getting my profession as an architect. Of all that I shall have much to say to you. Your 'uncle', Señor Fandango, will have a great deal more to tell you about me."

"Uncle! Poor Uncle! He is quite broken down now, Keefe, and has no one in the world but me."

"Stine, why did you cut me off from you so cruelly? I would not have troubled you or your 'uncle'. You might have trusted me."

"Keefe! It was you who cut me off. I wrote you many letters and you never answered me,"

"I never got a letter from you. If you wrote letters someone must have kept them from me."

"Yes."

"We know who must have done it. He was hard and cruel."

"He is changed now."

"I believe he is. I have seen him."

"Seen him!"

"I have promised to call on him again."

"And he received you well?"

"Was very glad to see me, but without recognizing me as Keefe, the builder's boy whom he despised."

"You called on him as a tourist, a stranger?"

"I called on him in pursuit of you."

"And you say he did not recognize you. He was pleased with your visit as a stranger. Poor Uncle! He makes few friends now. He shuns new acquaintances. I am surprised that he received you."

"I did not ask him to receive me; I just walked in to him. He gave me a very unexpected greeting. I think he had been half-asleep, but he started up and called me by my father's name."

"Your father! I don't understand."

"Neither did I. So astonished was I at the things he said that for some time I thought he was insane. But after humouring his madness, as I thought, for a while, I began to see the meaning of all that he was saying to me. It seems my father, Michael Kavanagh, was an early friend of his, and it is also evident that I am now more like my father than like the boy he intended you should never see again."

"Kavanagh! Your father? What does it mean? How can it be?"

"Sam Stonewall was only my uncle by marriage. When I left him to go my own way I took my own name. My father's name was Michael Kavanagh. It was also the name of Señor Fandango's early friend, who, he says, did him a fortunate service. I do not feel at all certain that this friend and my father were one and the same. There is no proof except the resemblance he insists upon, and which, if he has grown weak in mind, may be purely imaginary."

"He has not grown weak in mind," said Stine. "Has he told you all the story of his ingratitude to that early friend, his long neglect of a duty to the boy, and his late longing to meet with the son of Michael Kavanagh?"

"All," said Keefe, "and it sounded like a fairy tale."

"Unless he is mistaken in your identity it is an absolute reality. And I think your likeness to his friend, taken with your name, would seem too extraordinary a coincidence. But further investigations will clear the matter up. In the meantime you are Keefe."

"I am Keefe and you are Stine. What will he say to me when he knows I am the builder's boy?"

Stine laughed a happy laugh.

"That does not signify," she said. "God has given me back my friend, and whether he likes it at first or not, poor dear old uncle will have to be glad of it."

"He need not be ashamed of me now," said Keefe. "Whether I am the son of his friend or not, I have

entered on a noble career and am going to be successful in it. In the old days you cheered me on to hope for it, Stine. You kept up my heart when things were hard. You cared nothing about whether my father was a gentleman or not."

"Oh, Keefe, don't talk to me about gentlemen and ladies! I am still what I was then—nobody's daughter. Uncle has given me a name of his own invention, but who knows whom I belong to or where I came from?"

They sat on the roadside and talked over all that had happened in the lives of each since the day they parted on the railway platform.

It was all so strange. Providence had brought them together again, and here they were, the same and not the same, a young man and a young woman instead of a big boy and a little girl.

Providence had sent them education and good fortune by means and ways unexpected and improbable; and though they had suffered the pain of separation and doubt, they could not but perceive that through such trials they had been lifted into a higher atmosphere of moral and mental experience.

How would it have been with them if they had both remained struggling for existence in the slums of the East End of London? And if Keefe alone had fought his way into the world, even as he had actually done, how could Stine have kept pace with his advancement, toiling for her bread as old Milsom's daughter, a second time an orphan after the deaths of her foster parents, just able to earn her poor livelihood by the menial work of her hands from house to house in the streets that had known her childhood?

"So we must not be ungrateful to dear old Uncle Fandango," she said. "Every advantage that he could possibly give me he has given me."

She told of the happy friendship and womanly guardianship of Mrs. Petworth, carried on even now in faithful correspondence.

"I wonder if she is the Mrs. Petworth who is Roberts's friend in Paris," said Keefe.

"She is everybody's friend who needs a friend," said Stine. "In her last letter she mentioned a Mr. Roberts. How little I imagined—!"

"How little did I—when Roberts's sudden summons on business to Paris enabled me to come back to Toledo! Evening after evening we three—Castellan, Roberts, and myself—had sat in the Zocodover quite near your windows, and afterwards had gone away from this city hardly expecting to return. How little I guessed that it was you when Roberts told us of the young artist whose picture he had bought in Fisher's studio!"

There seemed to be no end to the comparing of notes on both sides. Keefe told all he knew about the break-up of the Milsom family. The last news from Sib had been that Mattie, the only member of the family left, had "pushed for herself" wonderfully, had taken a situation after her father's death in the home, and had been heard of no more in the neighbourhood.

The question now arose of how to break to Fandango the fact that Keefe Stonewall and the son of his old friend, Michael Kavanagh, were one and the same.

"Will he get a shock? Will it change his friendly

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feeling towards me?" asked Keefe. "I cannot guess. You know him better than I do."

"It will be all right," said Stine, with a bright laugh. "I will have some fun about it. Come to-morrow, as you promised him to come, and leave the rest to me."

CHAPTER XXXIV

In no Humour for Tricks

STINE found Fandango much excited over the wonderful discovery of Michael Kavanagh's son, who had walked in to him by the most extraordinary chance.

"It has been a lucky day," said Stine, "for do you know, Uncle, I too have met with an old friend."

"You? Who? How?"

"Do you remember Keefe Stonewall?"

"What? The builder's boy?"

"The very person."

"Then I am sorry to hear it. You must keep him at arm's length. A presuming, persevering, lubberly lad! I warned him not to pursue my daughter. How has he managed to find us out, and to put himself in your way while avoiding me?"

"He, also, is coming to-morrow morning, and he will tell you all about it."

"I shall not see him," said Fandango. "A fellow all slovenly hair and brick dust!"

"Now, Uncle, you were wrong there too. You have something else to make amends for. You know you were very hard on Keefe Stonewall."

"Perhaps I was. But there are occasions when it is a duty to be hard. I intended to make you a lady, Stine, and I have done so. What would you have

been if you had spent all these years grubbing about the streets in the East End of London, and hanging on to Keefe Stonewall? No, my dear, I shall not admit him to-morrow if he comes. Has his uncle, the builder, got a job to build up some of the ruins of this old Spanish city? And has this precious Keefe come with him to carry his hod of mortar?"

"I think not," said Stine, smiling.

"What is he doing here then?"

"Carrying on his studies as an architect. He will be a great man one day, Uncle. He has sent in a design for a new building in Paris. All the great architects are in competition about it."

"Oh, I know! You used to tell me stories of that kind about him before. He wanted to be an architect. How very likely!"

"Now, Uncle, get to bed, and we can talk about all these matters in the morning."

Fandango allowed himself to be coaxed, and went to bed, not sure of whether he was the more pleased to think of Michael Kavanagh's son having walked into his life or displeased at the audacity of Keefe Stonewall in pursuing Stine across the world, and proposing to visit him to-morrow.

Next morning he was up earlier than usual, and sat in his patio listening for an arrival. Stine had not gone as usual to the Puerta del Cambron, but was waiting also with keen interest while busy with some household matters. At last a door into the patio opened, Fandango threw down the book which he was trying to read, and saw Stine and Keefe come in.

"Uncle," said Stine, laughing, "allow me to introduce Keefe Stonewall, our friend of long ago."

Fandango drew back and gazed at them, from one to another.

"What is the meaning of this?" he said. "I am in no humour for tricks."

"Will you not shake hands with me, Señor?" said Keefe. "Yesterday you welcomed me as the son of Michael Kavanagh. To-day I am still the son of Michael Kavanagh, but my name is Keefe."

"It is a fraud," said Fandango, staring at him. "Stonewall is not Kavanagh."

"And Kavanagh never was Stonewall," said Keefe. "Look at me well, Señor. Can't you see the builder's boy in me still?"

"I can't," said Fandango. "I see my old friend come back to life, and still young, while I have grown old."

"Then let Keefe go and let me be Michael to you. It is enough for me that Stine remembers me as Keefe."

"It is incomprehensible," muttered Fandango. "You will be telling me next that we are now in London, and not in Toledo."

"No, sir. This is good old Spain—strange as it may be that we should meet so far from the place where we parted."

Fandango lay back in his chair looking exhausted and painfully puzzled.

"If you are Keefe Stonewall and also Michael's son, why did you not tell me who you were when I met you in London?"

"How could I know that it would be of any importance to you that my step-uncle, when he took his step-sister's orphan and friendless boy, called him

by his own name? Unlike you, he had never loved Michael Kavanagh, who, he fancied, had looked down on him; nor very much cared for my mother, his stepsister, who belonged to a better class of life."

"No; you couldn't know," said Fandango.

"And if I had told you, sir, would you have been as glad to meet me then as you were yesterday?"

"Should I?" said Fandango. "I was still in the swing of the world's prosperity then, wealthy, flattered, feeling myself a man of great importance. But I have you both now, Michael and Stine. For her you may be Keefe, for me you are Michael. Don't change and show me the builder's boy again, for I want you to be all Michael. But thank God I did not leave Stine behind me. How could I have lived in my reverse of fortune and with my weakened health but for her tender care of me?"

"And what should I have been, dear Uncle? Keefe could not have taken me up and educated me. I could only have been a drag on his brotherly affection."

"All very fine," said Fandango; "but after all, my good fellow, I am going to make enquiries about you. I am taking too much for granted, believing you and Stine on your word. I will write to your Uncle Stonewall to give me an account of you."

"Very well, sir. You will give him a great surprise. He rather kicked me out."

"What? He dared to ill-use Michael's son?"

"It was chiefly my own doing, sir. I did not like that brick-and-mortar business myself—not unless it had some soul behind it. I have an immense love of building, if beauty and power are allowed to make the

design. And my business is now with design. Stine knows that this was my passion in the days when we used to meet at the crossing."

"Ah, that crossing, where we all met! What trysting-places Providence provides for us! And how we arrive at them and think it is by accident! Little I knew when a wild little girl plucked me by my coat skirts and dragged me from the wheels of a motor that God was giving me a son and daughter to comfort my advancing years and impoverished circumstances! And now tell me something of that poor, good woman who had been a mother to Stine."

"She is dead, sir. They are all dead."

"Mattie!" said Stine.

"All but Mattie. In my last letter from Sib Stonewall she told me that Mattie had grown up very clever, and had taken a situation somewhere abroad. She had not heard from her for more than a year."

Gradually Fandango became accustomed and reconciled to the fact that Keefe Stonewall and the son of Michael Kavanagh were one, and he was soon deeply interested in the story of the young man's efforts to push his way to his profession, and in all the seeming "accidents" that had come to his assistance.

Castellan and Roberts became heroes in his eyes.

"Glorious fellows," he said, "to start up on the roadside and take Michael's boy by the hand!"

CHAPTER XXXV

At Castle O'Dougherty

“KATREEN,” said Lady Patrick, “I am arranging to pay a visit to my old home in Ireland. You ought to see your grandfather’s ancient castle and the beautiful country of your forefathers.

“I shall be so glad to go!” said Mattie, speaking with all her will. The prospect of such a move gave her a feeling of rest and security. Ireland, and so remote a part of it as the County of Clare, seemed the last place to which detection could follow her.

“While the beauty of the autumn lasts, so delightful in Ireland, we ought to be there,” said Lady Patrick. And very soon the old people on the O’Dougherty lands were rejoiced to see the castle all alive once more in preparation for the return of their dear Miss Moya, who went away in sorrow and was coming back a great grand madam from foreign, and bringing Miss Katreen’s daughter, who was drownded in a shipwreck before she could speak, and wasn’t drownded after all, but had grown up into a beautiful young lady.

“I am putting you into your mother’s room,” said Lady Patrick. “Ah, I can bear to enter it now myself, and you will have no painful associations with it!”

So thoroughly had Mattie thought herself into the

situation, and worn out her ever-weakening conscience, that she slept well in the beautiful old chamber out of which Stine's mother had gone forth a bride so many years ago. Those years, being more than the length of Mattie's lifetime, seemed to her so many that the existence of Katreen O'Dougherty appeared almost as remote as that of Queen Thi, the mother of the Egyptian monarch who worshipped the sun-god.

She followed Lady Patrick through all the rooms, nooks, and corners of the old castle, listening to her attentively while she told of life that was lived in them long ago.

"Here we did this, and there we said that! We quarrelled here one wet day when we were both cross, and just over there we flew into each other's arms to make it up? In this chair father used to sit when we clambered on his knees."

So the little notes of memory were unfolded, little rays of sunshine flitting from one spot to another, illuminating the long-overshadowed and deserted interior.

They had been living for a week in this sweet old home before Lady Patrick said wistfully:

"I wish you were more like your mother, Katreen. I have been gathering up my courage to show you what she was like."

Then was opened the door of the room into which Keefe had penetrated, and where he had stood before an easel bearing a picture which had strangely fascinated him, though the idea that his little lost friend of the East-End slums of London could have any connection with the daughters of Castle O'Dougherty had never entered his mind.

Mattie, with her knowledge, stood before the picture pale and cold, her heart sinking with dread. Here was Stine as she might now appear, grown up, if indeed she were alive. But it was impossible that she could be living. It had come to this with Mattie —she hoped that Stine was no longer alive.

“How sensitive you are, my darling!” said Lady Partick, putting an arm round her shoulders.

Mattie burst into tears and was caressed and taken away, and forbidden to return to that room till she should have become more accustomed to the memories of others concerning her young dead mother which were now continually thrust upon her.

But after that hour there was no more unalloyed joy for her at Castle O’Dougherty.

She would sometimes steal into the forbidden room and stand before the easel, confronted with Stine, now trying to persuade herself that the likeness was imaginary, now convinced that this tell-tale picture would one day be sure to find her out and denounce her. Would that it might be destroyed! But she could not dare to injure it. She spoke no more about it to Lady Partick, who took pains to interest her in stories of the old castle in bygone days, of the courage and endurance of her forefathers through storm and strife, and in the personality of the good grandfather, which was still so vividly real and present to his loving daughter. And Mattie, all the more prudent now because less confident, listened and asked questions, and appeared more interested in all these family matters of olden times than in the mother whose portrait had affected her so visibly.

When Mrs. Petworth came to pay a promised visit

Lady Partick's happiness was complete, and Mattie's uneasiness was greatly increased. Something in the strong yet delicate countenance of this her first powerful friend always troubled her with a consciousness of her own deceit, and she felt restless and depressed in her presence. She began to seek opportunities of leaving the friends together while she went for long walks alone through the beautiful country, trying to think out her true position and to devise some means of saving herself from discovery and disgrace.

On one of these occasions her walk led her in the direction of the cottage where Keefe had lodged, and old Mrs. Cronin came curtsying on the road to meet her.

“Forgive the liberty, Miss Katreen, for it must be you, for there's no other fine young lady would be walkin' these roads as if it was her own garden; and I said to myself ‘Here's Miss Katreen!’ though I never set eyes on you before. And I couldn't pass you without a welcome to your mother's daughter. Not that you're a bit like her in the world. Some say you have the features and the hair of Miss Moya, but I don't see it neither. Maybe it's your father you favour, and I hear he was a grand gentleman, though foreign, a thing he couldn't help. You wouldn't know me, of course, but I'm Mrs. Cronin, and my people were always about the castle in the good old days, and Miss Moya (I beg her ladyship's pardon) sent me word to come up and she would show me the daughter that the good God had sent to her, the child that ought to have been drownded and wasn't. But I was waitin' for my own daughter that has been stayin' with me and is away visitin' friends of ours,

and is to be here with me to-morrow for another day or two before she has to go back to London. Sure herself and your own mother used to play together when they were children, and it's glad she'll be to get a sight of Miss Katreen's daughter. She has none of her own (only a step-nephew that's grown up and gone away), but that's as God pleases, and she has a middlin' good husband that makes plenty of money, and it's Sib that is the fine manager, and is good to her mother. Sam Stonewall is a grand builder——”

“Stonewall!” echoed Mattie. “Sib Stonewall?”

“Sib Cronin she was, but Sib Stonewall now of course, on account of her husband. It's the first time she has come to see me these years back, but glad I am that it happened for her to come home when she could get a sight of Miss Katreen's daughter. But there, my dear, I've tired you out, and I heard you were not strong——”

“I'm not very strong,” murmured Mattie, feeling that her face had turned cold and that the world was beginning to whirl round and round her.

“Come into my little place and rest yourself, my dear. You do look weak.”

Mattie went into the cottage and sat down to rest till she felt her head steady again, and as they walked up to the castle she drew a good deal of information from Mrs. Cronin about Sib Stonewall and her present circumstances, and about the step-nephew, Keefe Stonewall, who was gone away far abroad, but had been here some years ago with Mrs. Cronin, and some day might be expected to return to see her.

Oh, what a mistake she had made, thought Mattie,

in coming to this place believing it to be a haven of security! The first thing to be done was to avoid the meeting with Sib, who was to arrive with Mrs. Cronin to-morrow, to see Miss Katreen's daughter, the child "who ought to have been drownded and wasn't".

The idea of being confronted with Sib, and all her deceit revealed by Mrs. Stonewall's astonished greetings, was too dreadful to be dwelt on. She must avoid her now; and once back in the East End of London, Sib would be as completely removed as ever out of the course of life marked out by fortune for the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, the granddaughter of Sir Colman O'Dougherty.

She must take ill at once and stay in bed till Mrs. Stonewall was safely out of the country.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Mrs. Petworth Speaks

MATTIE told no untruth to Lady Patrick that night when she declared that she had a violent headache and felt altogether ill.

"You do look ill, my darling," said Lady Patrick.
"You have caught a chill."

Mattie required no urging to induce her to stay in bed all the next day.

"I am sorry on account of poor Mrs. Cronin," said Lady Patrick, "as the good soul has been waiting for her daughter to come up to see you. They will be so disappointed."

"I saw Mrs. Cronin yesterday," said Mattie.
"Why should her daughter be so anxious to see me?"

"Because they loved your mother," said Lady Patrick quietly. "But you can't realize that, dear; and of course your precious health is beyond every other consideration to me."

Mattie did not say: "Why cannot Mrs. Stonewall stay a little longer with her mother, so that I may see her when I am better?" She was dreading to hear some such proposal made, and resolved that if Sib were to stay in the hope of seeing her she would

remain ill in bed until the possible limits of her visit were overpassed.

On the morrow the worthy mother and daughter appeared at the castle as had been arranged, dressed in their best, Sib eager to see the child of her dear Miss Katreen, who had been her little playfellow when they were children. Mattie, hearing of their arrival, turned her face to the wall as she lay, and said she was unable even to bear the light on her face, which was true enough, for the light of truth was threatening to scorch her.

Lady Patrick received Mrs. Cronin and her daughter in her kind way, assuring them of Miss Katreen's great regret at having been prevented by illness from seeing them. They spent a pleasant day, and returned home in the evening well pleased with their visit in all but the failure of the one particular object that had taken them to the castle.

Sib's sojourn with her mother came to an end a few days later, and Mattie was careful not to leave her bed till after Mrs. Cronin had come once more and returned home again, lamenting that her daughter had been obliged to go away without seeing Miss Katreen.

"And I don't think she'll be able to come back to me soon, for the husband's a stiff sort of man, and doesn't give her too much of her liberty. But sure, all the same, Sib canonizes him, and it's not for me to be complainin' of him."

Mattie now breathed more freely, and became convalescent, though peace had fled her in the county of Clare, and she realized the truth of the saying that "the world is small", and that the most unlikely

people may be met with in the most unlikely places. She was beginning to long feverishly for the return to Paris, with its safety in crowds, when the unexpected arrival of Roberts made a little sensation in the family circle.

Lady Patrick was not quite pleased to see him when he called at the castle, explaining that he had run over for a walk across the County Clare, to refresh his memory of scenery and people who had charmed him some years ago. But she invited him to stay the night.

As it proved, staying the night meant staying many nights, and Roberts made himself so agreeable to his entertainers, and appeared so happy with them, that even Lady Patrick's prejudice began to abate. Many pleasant excursions were planned, some ruins were explored, and Roberts was called on to explain their original style and meaning.

"I am not as good an architect as one of my friends," he said. "If I had young Kavanagh here he would tell us all about them. This is his own country and he was making a study of these ruins and their history when I met him. Continental architecture attracts me more—naturally."

Mattie cared nothing about the ruins, or about any kind of architecture, nor about young Kavanagh; but she was becoming intensely interested in Roberts and his admiration for herself. In him she began to see an escape from her present difficulties. He could take her to America, far away from all danger of discovery, leaving behind her the pearl necklace, which she now detested, and the chances of ever again meeting with Stine and Fandango. There was about him

an air of good nature and readiness to help and protect which made her feel that it would be easier for her to confess her deceit to him than to any of the other friends who loved her.

Yet as the days went on, and she knew him longer and understood him better, the shrinking from any such confession grew more, and the desire for such a confidence grew less. His admiration and approval were necessary to her, and she found herself wondering whether she could not marry him without betraying the secret of her antecedents and her false position in this family that had accepted her. She felt instinctively that her lack of fortune would be of no consequence in his eyes; but the increasing perception of his honest views and perfect right-mindedness dismayed her, as proving how terribly she should fall in his opinion did he know the truth, and how unlikely it was that he could ever excuse and forgive her.

They had long rides and walks together, and Lady Patrick, astonished at the wilfulness shown by her Katreen in this matter, was hardly persuaded by Mrs. Petworth to allow things to go on as they were going without her decided interference.

“I have told you of my respect for Arthur Roberts,” said Mrs. Petworth. “You will meet with no better man. There is evidently a strong attraction on both sides, and where both man and woman are good it is the best foundation and surety of happiness in marriage.”

Tears came into Lady Patrick’s eyes.

“I know you are preternaturally wise,” she said; “but I cannot feel that I am ready to part so soon

with my darling. And I am disappointed in her. I thought she loved me better than anything in the world; and here is this stranger already stealing her heart from me."

Some weeks passed, and Roberts was still at the castle, Lady Patrick uneasy at his continued presence, unwilling to hurt him by coldness, but feeling quite perplexed as to the kind of influence he exerted over her Katreen.

"He does not make her happy," she said to Mrs. Petworth. "She grows moody and changeable. Her gay spirits are overcast. He evidently interests her intensely, and she allows him to see it. If it were a wholesome influence, why is she not more happy? Relying on your conviction, I have not interfered. I confess I think her attitude towards him seems due more to hypnotism than to affection."

Mrs. Petworth was herself beginning to feel perplexed. Her power of penetration assured her that Katreen appreciated the sterling value of the man's character, and that she was strongly attracted by him; but she also perceived that the girl, while holding by his companionship, seemed determined to ward off all his approaches to anything warmer than mere friendship.

She began to observe more closely the changefulness of mood complained of by Lady Patrick—Mattie's occasional bursts of high spirits and more frequent fits of depression. Something was wrong. Was it that the girl thought it would be ungrateful to turn away so soon from the bountiful and loving aunt to follow a stranger, leaving this true "mother" as childless and lonely as before she had met her? It

seemed to Mrs. Petworth one of those cases when a clear understanding is to be desired before everything else. A little judicious interference might be useful in this exceedingly delicate matter.

She watched for an opportunity, and at last found occasion to speak to Mattie.

"My dear," she said, "you will forgive an old woman who loves you if she speaks to you on a very serious matter."

Mattie turned pale. The secret of her deceit was always present in her mind as the most serious matter on which she could be questioned.

Mrs. Petworth noticed her change of countenance, and thought: "It is evident that her affections are very much engaged."

"Katreen," she said, "I want to speak to you about your friendship with Mr. Roberts."

Mattie breathed more freely.

"Is it not a worthy friendship?" she said quietly.

"Most worthy," said Mrs. Petworth. "But, dear child, do not play with the affections of so excellent a man as Arthur Roberts. It is evident that his happiness is staked on you. Such devotion from such a man ought to make you glad—unless you feel that you cannot accept him as your husband."

Mattie changed colour again and began to tremble.

"Oh, Mrs. Petworth!" she cried in a sharp tone of distress.

"I want to help you if I can," said the old lady. "You have seen your aunt looking anxious, and you may fear that she would never consent to lose you. But you must believe in her motherly feeling, which would overcome all selfish considera-

tions for the happiness of the child who is so dear to her."

Mattie hung her head. "She is far too good to me," she said, "far too much above me in nobility of character to understand me, as are you also, who were my first friend. But—but—Mr. Roberts has not asked me to marry him. And if he did—"

She paused, with a look of genuine distress.

"I gather that you are not quite sure of your own feelings," said Mrs. Petworth. "Forgive my interference, dear child. If the hint I have given you should help you at all, I may forgive myself, but if not, it were better I had been silent."

CHAPTER XXXVII

An Enforced Renunciation

IT was after this conversation that Mattie realized how inextricably she was entangled in the meshes which her ambition, cowardice, and deceit had woven around her.

Lying awake at night, grieving and chafing at her unhappy position, she reviewed every step she had taken out of the path of honour and honesty, and perceived that had she been frank with Lady Patrick in telling the story of the restored child and the necklace she might now have been happy and fortunate in the possession of a good man's devoted affection. That Roberts loved her was not an imagination of her own, but was evidently perceived by all her friends. Had she remained in her true position as Mathilde, Lady Patrick's secretary, fostered as she had been by the kindness of her generous employer, she would have met with Roberts all the same, and could have told him the true history of her antecedents without fear of his contempt, could have returned his affection without dread of detection or remorse for deceiving him.

But the time had gone past—confession had become impossible to her. Her conscience had been sufficiently aroused to make her aware that she could never accept any man as her husband without making

the entire truth known to him, and the courage for such a venture was not, she believed, in her nature.

Sometimes she would go to her window, to see the pale dawn growing in the sky behind the dark mountains that seemed to frown on her tribulation and to condemn her unworthiness, and she would tell herself that the only way of escape out of her difficulties would be to depart by that dawnlight some morning, and be heard of no more by the friends she had deceived.

From some hiding place to which she would give them no clue she would write to Lady Patrick the full account of her misdoings, telling her of the existence of Stine, who she believed was to be found somewhere in Egypt, living in the care of the singer Fandango, who had adopted the desolate child as his daughter.

But having thought out all the details of this plan, and realized it in her imagination, she invariably fell back on the conviction that she would never have courage to carry it out. No, she must drift on till discovery pounced on her. Perhaps it would never overtake her; but at all events she could never run to meet it.

One morning, after having spent the night hours sadly in battling with these thoughts, she left the castle by the first light of dawn and went for a long walk in the direction of the mountains, trying to steady her mind in the freshness of the morning air, so that she might play her part with equanimity in the proceedings of the coming day.

As she went she was pursued by the idea that so might she have to go forth some day, alone and

miserable; but turning her face towards home again such dreariness was overcome by the warmth of the feeling, so familiar, of loving friends and luxurious surroundings awaiting her.

Rounding a curve of the road, she came face to face with Roberts, who had seen her leave the house early and was coming to meet her.

Something in his eyes told her that he was going to say words that she was afraid to hear, and she hurried homeward beside him, trying to divert his attention from herself by pointing out the beauties of the landscape. But Roberts was not to be baffled. He had come to say something, and he was determined to be allowed to say it.

"I had news last night that obliges me to return to Paris at once," he said.

"It will be a pleasant change. This county of Clare is dull for anyone accustomed to a life of movement and gaiety," said Mattie, making an effort to say something.

"I have not found it dull, and never could, while allowed to be near you," said Roberts earnestly; "and unless you are tired of me——"

"Oh no!" faltered Mattie, "you have been very good to me."

"Have I? Will you be a little bit good to me before I go? Katreen, I am sure you know that I love you, and that you have not quite discouraged me——"

"You must never say so," said Mattie.

"Will you not give me a little hope to live on till we meet again, a hope that one day you will be my wife?"

"No," said Mattie resolutely. "I have made up my mind that I will never marry anyone."

"You are too young for any such resolution. Forgive me. I am many years older than you. You are only a child in experience. If you tell me you do not care for me, even then I shall hope to change your mind, for it is my nature to be obstinately hopeful. But if you assure me that at present you positively dislike me——"

"No," said Mattie vehemently, and burst into tears and clung to the big hand that had laid hold of her own. "I have liked you very much. It is only that I have too sad a nature to make anyone happy."

"Nonsense!" said Roberts. "Try me!"

Mattie recovered herself quickly.

"I am sorry you are going," she said, "but it is better so, for I am quite in earnest in saying that I can never marry."

Roberts smiled. "Never is a long day," he said. "But I will plague you no more. I may not have another opportunity of speaking to you alone before I go, but remember you have told me that you have liked me and that I have been good to you. I shall be able to live on that for a very long time. Come now, there is the sun pushing his way through the clouds to make you happy."

"It is breakfast-time, and they will be wondering about us," said Mattie, and they walked on in silence the rest of the way.

After breakfast Mattie hid herself, and Roberts told Lady Patrick in a few words that he had proposed to her niece and had been rejected.

Lady Patrick's eyes sparkled.

"I am sorry for your disappointment," she said, "but you cannot expect me to regret that my child is not to leave me. I have not interfered in this matter. Her own feelings have been her only prompter."

"I am aware of that," said Roberts. "You have been very generous. But I must be quite frank, and tell you that I shall never give up all hope until she marries another man."

"You think so now," said Lady Patrick, "but we shall see. The world is full of charming women, and you are not a man to be more than once rejected. Katreen has had experiences—trials that make her different from ordinary girls. She has often said to me that she does not intend to marry."

Roberts smiled. In his heart he believed that Katreen cared for him, more perhaps than she was aware of herself, and he departed in such excellent spirits that Lady Patrick said to Mrs. Petworth:

"So you see no harm has been done to anyone after all. Katreen has merely enjoyed the society of a cultivated and interesting American, and he has taken his rejection philosophically. As for me, the anxiety I have suffered has been proved to have no foundation whatever."

Mrs. Petworth had thoughts of her own on the subject which she did not disclose to her friend. She believed that Roberts had reason for his cheerful conviction that Katreen cared more for him than she would admit. It seemed to the penetrating mind of the old lady that there was a deeper cause for this reserve on the girl's part than a mere affec-

tionate unwillingness to disappoint her motherly aunt.

"But who can interpret the acts or words or even looks of another?" she reflected. "Time proves all, and to time we can safely leave the issue of most things that concern the very young."

Mattie's peculiar misery was at this moment caused by her enforced renunciation of all that Roberts had offered her, a devoted affection responded to by her own heart, escape from her increasing difficulties and cruel entanglements, protection under the shelter of his strong character, with the lasting prosperity to which she would have an indisputable right as his wife. To lose all this and to be thrown back on secrecy, uncertainty, daily fear of detection and consequent loss of friends and good name, was none the less intolerable because recognized as the inevitable punishment of her cowardly departure from the ways of truth and honesty.

Being, as she was still, a coward, nothing was possible to her now except persistence in her imposture. She must wish for the death of Stine and that of Keefe Stonewall, or endure the constant torture of fearing to meet one or both of them. Her last hope must be to marry a man whom she should not scruple to deceive, a man not himself highminded, whose opinion she could not respect. By such means only could she get away from those who would never forgive her once discovery had overtaken her, who would hate her for the pain and disappointment she had brought upon them.

Eating her heart out with these bitter thoughts, she longed to get away from the place where she

might any day be confronted with Sib Stonewall. Sam Stonewall might die, and Sib come to live with her mother. She imagined a dreadful scene in which Sib would greet her as Mattie Milsom and ask her what had become of Stine, the child who had been rescued from the wreck by her father. Could she then persuade Lady Patrick and Mrs. Petworth that the woman was mad, and did not know what she was saying?

No, there was more safety for her in the crowds of Paris, where Katreen, the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, might almost brush up against such persons as Stine and Keefe without actual contact with them.

"I am coming to the conclusion that this place does not agree with her health," said Lady Patrick. "She does not look well, and her spirits are extraordinarily fitful. At all events it is time for us to return to Paris." And to Paris they returned.

Mattie, finding herself once more an atom in the gay society of Paris, felt her spirits revive. Her courage to persevere in the course she had taken was braced and strengthened. Constant change and excitement left little time or opportunity for the rebukes and reminders of her conscience. The solemn gaze of the mountains and the loud voice of the sea had ceased to preach to her of repentance and reparation. The world of her ambition was at her feet. The only difference between her present state of mind and that of her first experience as Miss St. Hilary in Paris was that Roberts had been added to the list of those she dreaded to meet. He had

probed her nature so deeply that he had found her heart, and stirred in her an unhappy consciousness of her wrongdoing. She could not afford to cultivate either heart or conscience, and she feared the moral influence which a response to his strong attachment to her would exercise over her conduct. To confess to him on her knees and then flee from him would be the only ultimate result of a continued association with him.

Mrs. Petworth and Lady Patrick were both puzzled by her determined attitude to avoid him.

"Do not ask me to meet him," she said. "No, he never offended me or troubled me, except by his perseverance. But he cares too much for me, and I do not intend to be persuaded to marry him."

"You see how true and honourable she is," said Lady Patrick, delighted. "Many a girl in her place would be pleased to see her power and be satisfied to use it, not believing in the depth of a man's attachment. Her understanding of her responsibility proves to me how noble is her own conception of duty in these delicate matters."

Mrs. Petworth tried to see a keen and true perception in her friend's view, but she was still puzzled by surprising a shadow as of some deeply-rooted fear in Katreen's eyes at moments of pause in the whirl of amusement. And though anxious to sympathize with the girl even in her unreasonable shrinking from what gave her pain or annoyance, yet she felt awkwardly placed with regard to Roberts, who, she knew, relied on her friendship to afford him opportunities for meeting Katreen and patiently persevering in his efforts to woo her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Keefe in Paris

To a letter from Stine Mrs. Petworth replied immediately, with an invitation to Keefe to come to her at once on his arrival in Paris.

"I am extremely interested in what you tell me of yourself and of your friend," she wrote. "From the first I noticed your reserve with regard to your early years, and I doubted your relationship with Señor Fandango, who has, however, been not only an uncle, but a true father to the child he adopted. That Keefe Kavanagh, from whom he parted you, should prove to be one in whom he himself is particularly interested seems like a fairy tale. But truly, real life is often more wonderful in its developments than any story that could be invented. I have heard a great deal of the clever design chosen for the new building, and the brilliant young architect from whose genius much is to be expected in the future. I little imagined how closely he was connected with the life and fortunes of my dearly-loved Stine, whose interests and whose happiness are nearer to my heart than those of any other living creature."

"How sweet and true she is!" said Stine, handing the letter to Keefe. "It is so long a time since she saw me, and there was a long interval after uncle lost his voice when he would not allow me to write to her,

and when she must have been tempted to think I was ungrateful and had forgotten her."

"She knew you too well to believe you had forgotten," said Keefe, "and yet I knew you, and I believed it. But God is good, and now we have all been led to understand each other."

Mrs. Petworth talked these matters over with Roberts, who kept very near her, though forbearing to press her for meetings with Katreen.

"The happenings of life are always taking us by surprise," she said. "I find that your friend Keefe is an early friend of my dear child Stine, who is the charming pupil of Aaron Fisher, the artist, whom you met in his studio at Toledo."

"That discovery has been made since I was there," said Roberts. "I knew that Kavanagh had had rough times, and had been shunted by a curmudgeon uncle, who wanted him to carry a hod of mortar all his life, or something of that kind. But he never told me anything more about his friends."

"Sorrow and difficulties, and the want of sympathy from their elders, sometimes make young people reticent," said Mrs. Petworth. "I give them plenty of sympathy, but at the same time I always respect their reserve."

When Keefe arrived in Paris he met with a brilliant reception from the learned and artistic section of the public, who were interested in his work and in the bestowal of the prize that had been awarded to his genius. He was invited to a public banquet, at which Roberts and Castellan were also present, as belonging to the Honourable Company of International Architects. Keefe sent some of the newspapers

reporting the proceedings to Sam Stonewall, who, seeing Keefe's name so often appearing, took great pains to have them translated, and was filled with a curious mixture of consternation, pride, and a kind of resentment at seeing the extraordinary success of the lad he had spurned.

Sib, with her usual tact, forbore to triumph over him, though her kind heart was swelling with joy. Had she not known what Keefe would come to when she hid his boxes of books under the bed in his room, and saved a bit of supper for him when he came home late from his classes? It was all for the best, she bethought her, that Sam had put him out, for if he had lingered on in the builder's home he could never have met with the friends who had opened the way to his success.

As soon as he could find time amidst his busy engagements in Paris he ran over to London to see her, and tell her all the news.

"It's a wonderful world," said Sib, "and strange the way things turn out and people turn up again. There's Miss Katreen's daughter at Castle O'Dougherty has been found alive, and never was drowned. I very nearly saw her when I was over there with my mother."

Keefe, thinking of Roberts, said: "Yes, I have heard so. And I believe she is a charming young lady."

"Mother was a bit disappointed with her," said Sib; "thought her cold, and not free and pleasant like the family. But Lady Patrick was delighted with her."

"Did you ever hear anything more at all about

Mattie Milsom?" asked Keefe. "I wonder how the world has treated her since the days of old? She was left very lonely."

"She's quite given up writing to me," said Sib. "But never you fear; Mattie would light on her feet wherever she jumped to. She was that knowing and polished that she would be able for anything that got in her way. If she wasn't getting on well I think she would have wrote to me. She was getting a little grand in her letters the last I had from her, and maybe it's a thing that she's too grand entirely for me now. She had turned out very good-looking, and the education she gave herself would give you a surprise."

"And the poor old man died," said Keefe, "the good old fellow who rescued Stine."

"Die he did," said Sib; "and of course there was nothing more to keep Mattie in London."

Sam Stonewall's respect for the successful Keefe was amusing to see. It amounted almost to awe as he took his nephew's hand outstretched to him.

"You were a bit too much for me," he said, "but she was good to you," and he jerked his thumb towards his wife.

"That she was," said Keefe. "And you, sir, you gave me food and shelter when I needed it, and I am afraid I was not much use to you."

Sam hung his head for a moment, but recovered himself.

"You'll be a-doing of a bit of building over there," he said, "a-getting up that fine monument of yours that they're makin' such a noise about. Mightn't the whole of the business be kept in the family? But

maybe the mounseers wouldn't be willin' to let John Bull have a finger in any of their pies."

"I don't know as to that," said Keefe, laughing, "but I will see if anything can be done about it."

His visit to London was necessarily short, and he returned to take up his residence in Paris.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Discovered

KEEFE was kept so busy with the arrangements and operations for the erection of the great building of his design that he had little time for society or the making of new acquaintances. His letters to Stine were filled with details of the interior and exterior of a beautiful and majestic structure which he had seen in his dreams, and which he longed to behold perfectly realized.

It was to be a palace home for choice books and pictures, including a great library and a reading-room of original form and graceful and splendid proportions, also an exquisitely-designed gallery for painting and sculpture. All the beauties and conveniences had been carefully studied and their practicability thought out, and not a flaw had been found in the plans by the competent judges and critics to whom they had been submitted, and who had examined them thoroughly.

“You, more than anyone,” he wrote to Stine, “can understand the delight I take in the prospect of seeing this work accomplished, with all its grand comprehensiveness and refinement of detail. I am not afraid to appear conceited to you, who knew and sympathized with my aspirations and believed in me when you were only a child, and

I was in other people's eyes nothing but a boy fit to handle bricks and mortar, who was led astray from obvious duties by a silly ambition. You encouraged me then to believe in myself, and ever since the hope of justifying your faith in me has been the light of my life. That I should have made such a success so early is still a wonder to me, though Roberts and Castellan tell me they always expected it. If when completed the work is approved of by the authorities of my profession and by the public, then my name will be established and a certain amount of fortune assured to me.

"Your good friend, Mrs. Petworth, would open the way to me for any amount of pleasure, and Roberts is anxious that through her I should be introduced to Miss St. Hilary. He is a curious fellow in this matter, for he is still devoted to her, though the lady has rejected him, and is unwilling even to see him, so that her friends do not ask him to meet her.

"At present I am too much pre-occupied with my work to take advantage of kind invitations, but I hope to have a little more liberty soon."

To this Stine replied, assuring him of her constant sympathy, and of the pleasant impression he had made on Mrs. Petworth, who desired to see as much of him as possible, and to introduce him to her very dear friends the Fitzpatricks.

"I am greatly interested," wrote Stine, "in what she tells me of Miss St. Hilary, whose story is as strange as my own, but happier, inasmuch as she has been wonderfully restored to her family. But I would not change places with her, for my friends are as dear as, perhaps more dear to me than even her affectionate and noble relations can be to her. I hope you will soon have an opportunity of meeting her."

A day came at last when Keefe accepted an invitation to dine with Mrs. Petworth.

She had arranged a party of young people as an occasion for introducing the young architect to some of those who would be pleased to make his acquaintance. Katreen had been the first bidden, and had readily agreed to be one of the company.

Mrs. Petworth had taken occasion to express regret that Roberts would not be in Paris on that particular day, thus humouring the girl's present disinclination to meet him, an objection which she believed was bound to pass away if not opposed.

"Sometimes worth is discovered in absence," she reflected, "by those who cannot see an object that is too near to their eyes."

"I am to meet Miss St. Hilary to-morrow evening," wrote Keefe to Stine. "Poor Roberts has gone away for a day or two, to avoid being of the party. I am really curious to see the young lady who has failed to appreciate him. Because I am so happy myself I am the more sympathetic with my friend. What a different man I should be if you had turned your dear face away from me!"

The approaching dinner-party was a great event to Keefe. Only a very few years ago he had no prospects, social or professional; nothing in his life seemed to make it possible that he could ever rise to any better position than that of a builder's assistant. And now, without, as it seemed to him, any great effort of his own, or any bounty from patrons, he found himself in possession of a certain share of fame, his ambition already to a great extent gratified, persons of distinction extending to him the hand of friendship.

Above all, he was assured of the faithful affection of the one creature whom he had loved most dearly from his earliest boyhood, the inspirer of his present dreams, the encourager of his wildest hopes, who had promised to share his labours and his fortunes all the way onward until the end of their lives.

Entering Mrs. Petworth's beautiful *appartement*, he was a little dazzled by the brilliance of the place and the people surrounding him. The rooms with their charming decorations, the glittering and glowing of lights and flowers, the little pleasant purr of light conversation, gave him a sense of agreeable exhilaration. The groups of figures here and there were merely unfamiliar figures. He distinguished no features. Of the ladies he only saw fair faces and the gleam of light dresses. He had acquaintance with but one among the men, and with him and Castellan he stood talking. He noticed the pure whiteness of his hostess's crown of hair, and the rich hue of her purple velvet dress, also the diamonds on her fingers that held her fan, but this was when she was speaking to him.

Presently she led him up to a pretty young lady and introduced him as her partner at the dinner table. The girl was easy to get on with, as she chattered all the time and Keefe was not called on to make any lengthy speeches; and when the gay party moved into the dining-room he had a fresh experience. He had sat at a table with clever men, but never at a banquet where men and women met to entertain each other while enjoying together all the dainties of a luxurious feast. His pretty neighbour amused him with her lively remarks and her childish questions as to his method for inventing beautiful buildings, how it was

done, and whether or not a woman could learn to do it.

Keefe told her the story of the building of Cologne Cathedral, and the legend of Sabine; and when that was done, began to feel so much at home that he was able to glance freely up and down the table, and to notice individually the features of those who composed the company.

While still giving polite attention to his neighbour, he reviewed the young faces of the girls opposite to him, beginning at the top of the table, and thinking, as his glances took them in, that no face there was equal in beauty or intelligence to Stine's, placing her among them in imagination, robing her in diaphanous white and gold and decking her with jewels. But, though lovelier than all these, she could not look more lovely than sitting in the patio at Toledo, or on Fisher's terrace at the Puerta del Cambron, in her simple everyday garments.

And then, as his glances moved on down the table, he suddenly found that he was sitting face to face with Mattie Milsom.

His surprise was so great that he sat looking at her with a fixed stare for half a minute, and then, meeting her eyes without the slightest recognition in them, he dropped his own with a confusing sense of uncertainty as to whether or not he had made an extraordinary blunder.

How very unlikely that it could be Mattie! And yet it was possible. Sib had seemed to believe that Mattie's ambition and energy had pushed her into a prosperous way of life. Mrs. Petworth was proverbially kind to young people, and so—

He glanced at her again, and was not quite sure that it was Mattie. He had not seen her since she was a tall, precocious girl of fourteen. She had then already grown pretty, but the air of refinement and hauteur that distinguished the young lady sitting opposite to him was something quite foreign to the girl of the London slums who had envied and denounced Stine because of her good fortune and of her apparent forgetfulness of her early friends. Continuing to observe her as much as he dared without exciting notice, he saw that she was more richly dressed than any other girl present, and that she wore remarkable jewels; and he said to himself that these very distinguishing circumstances made it impossible that the person he was looking at, who bore so strong a resemblance to her, could be Mattie Milsom.

And, besides, she had shown no sign of recognizing him. True, he was so much changed that Fandango had not known him as Keefe Stonewall, the builder's boy, and had seen in him a perfectly different personality, reproducing the image of his own long-dead father. But then, the whole thing was too unlikely, and he must not continue to stare at the lady.

"Have you been struck with a new inspiration?" asked his pretty companion, piqued at his sudden fit of absence of mind. "What is it to be—a museum, or mausoleum, or a cathedral?"

"Which you please," said Keefe, recovering himself. "I have only been observing the company. I am a stranger in Paris. I am interested in meeting all these charming persons. Can you tell me who is the young lady sitting opposite to me?"

"Right opposite? The girl with the wonderful pearl necklace? That is Miss St. Hilary, Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick's niece. She has a romantic history. Perhaps you may have heard it."

"I have heard that there is a romantic story, but not the particulars," said Keefe.

"She was supposed to have been drowned when a baby, but was saved by a good old sailor, who brought her up as his own child. I have no idea of her adventures before Lady Patrick discovered that her sister's child was living. They do not talk much about it—"

"Naturally," said Keefe, in a mechanical way. "One would not pry. But it is a very unusual story."

He thought of Roberts, who had not told him quite so much of Miss St. Hilary's history as he had just now heard.

"I wonder if the old sailor is still living, and what country he belonged to!" he said.

"Oh, he was an Englishman, and he is dead! Katreen lived in London as a child, and among quite poor people. That is all I know. I believe she is rather sensitive on the subject of her childhood's experiences."

Keefe said no more. The figures of Mattie and Stine as he remembered them so well in Mrs. Mil-som's garret in the East End of London were before him. Was not this story of Mattie, Stine's story, and what did it all mean? His mind was working on the evidence of fraud, or mistake, or extraordinary coincidence. Was this Mattie, or had an astonishing personal resemblance appeared to add to a series of coincidences?

Before the company left the table he glanced again at the lady who sat opposite to him, and caught a look of intense anxiety furtively directed towards himself and instantly withdrawn. The expression of the eyes at the moment removed all doubt of her identity. It recalled a peculiar expression he had often seen in the eyes of a girl of fourteen whom he had known five or six years ago. She was Mattie Milsom.

CHAPTER XL

“Who will Believe You?”

WHEN the ladies had left the table Keefe remained lost in thought, bewildered with strange inconsistencies, like a man in a dream who takes impossibilities as matters of course, but is worried and perplexed by them. He was obliged to make an effort to behave naturally, and was aware that the young men of the company had found him a rather dull fellow.

Returning to the drawing-room he stood talking, or rather listening, to Castellan, who noticed something unusual about him and asked him what was the matter.

“I’m a little tired,” said Keefe. “I am not accustomed to entertainments like this, and perhaps I am out of my element. Excuse my stupidity, like a good fellow. I shall get used to it all in time, I hope.”

Mrs. Petworth came up before Castellan had time to reply, and said:

“Mr. Kavanagh, I want to introduce you to my young friend, Miss St. Hilary.”

The next minute Keefe found himself following his hostess across the room with a keen consciousness that this honour was being done him as a friend of Stine and as a friend of Roberts, and that it was offer-

ing him an opportunity of further satisfying himself as to the identification of Mattie Milsom with Miss Katreen St. Hilary.

He had made his bow before her, and Mrs. Petworth had said a few pleasant words and turned away to attend to some other guests, before Keefe raised his eyes and saw Mattie gazing at him with a white, set face, ready at all points to discourage his approach. He had seen such a look in her face long ago when she had denounced Stine and declared her determination to push her way in the world. He returned her gaze steadily, and said:

“Mattie! You and I are old acquaintances.”

The girl was trembling, but controlled herself.

“You make a mistake,” she said. “I never saw you before. My name is Katreen St. Hilary.”

“You have seen me before as Keefe Stonewall. My real name is Kavanagh, but I am still the same Keefe. How have you changed your name from Milsom to St. Hilary?”

Mattie was silent for a moment, and then with the impulse of desperation she uttered her lie a second time.

“I am not called Milsom,” she said, “my name is St. Hilary. My aunt is Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick. You are a rude and impertinent person, and if you persist in annoying me I shall complain to my friends.”

“And I shall maintain the truth,” said Keefe. “You must inform me of how you have come by your present name and position. If not, I am the person to make appeal to your friends. And I shall feel bound to do it in the interests of another whose

place in the world you have, as it seems to me, dishonestly taken and cannot be allowed to keep possession of."

"Who will believe you?" said Mattie. "My friends will not listen to you. What evidence have you against me? Once for all, I am Katreen St. Hilary, Mr. Kavanagh, and I know nothing about your Keefe Stonewall or your Mattie Milsom."

Having thus thrown down the gauntlet, she rose up and walked away, unable to bear the strain longer; and Mrs. Petworth, observing her, said to herself that Kavanagh had been imprudently speaking to Katreen about Roberts, and that she regretted having introduced him to her.

She was further surprised to see Kavanagh follow Katreen to another part of the room, and again engage her in conversation.

"I fear this young man is over-zealous in his friend's cause," she reflected. "Arthur Roberts would not approve of it. Katreen already looks distressed. She is not a girl to submit to persecution."

Meanwhile Mattie was repressing her impulse to cry out in her terror of the discovery and the disgrace that were threatening her, and Keefe was saying some things that he felt he must say to her before she escaped from him to some place where it might be difficult to approach her in future.

"I must see you alone and have a full explanation from you," he said. "I want to know how you have managed to put yourself in Stine's place."

"Who is Stine?" said Mattie boldly.

"Stine is a girl who was saved from drowning by your father, Joss Milsom, when she was an infant,

and was brought up by your mother, side by side with yourself, until the singer Fandango adopted her as his daughter.”

“She is dead,” said Mattie.

“She is not dead. I saw her a short time ago. I had a letter from her this morning. If the child rescued by your father has proved to be the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, that child never was you, but is Stine. You have taken possession of all that belongs to her by a fraud.”

Mattie was getting deathly white and feeling dizzy.

“Stop,” she said, “or I shall scream and faint.”

“Promise that you will give me an opportunity of speaking to you alone. I do not want to expose your conduct—you must do all that yourself. But if you try to persist in your deception and dishonesty I will inform Stine’s family and friends of the truth.”

“I will see you; I will talk to you,” said Mattie, seeing that she had made a slip, but rallying her courage. “You do not understand. I can explain. There is much that you know nothing about. How am I to arrange to meet you?”

“Mrs. Petworth will manage it,” said Keefe. “And you must remember that if you do not keep your promise I am not bound to spare you.”

Mattie hid her white face behind her fan, and Keefe turned away and went to say good night to his hostess.

“I hope you have not been imprudent in the interests of our friend Arthur Roberts,” said Mrs. Petworth mildly. “It is a delicate case, and even an enthusiastic mediator must proceed delicately.”

Keefe stared, but quickly understood the good lady's misapprehension.

"She has promised to give me a private interview in a matter that is truly a delicate and a serious one," he said. "I shall trust to your kindness to supply an opportunity."

Mrs. Petworth looked a little troubled, but assured him she would do as he wished, in case Miss St. Hilary also desired an opportunity of meeting him alone.

"And do not, I beg of you, say anything of the matter to Roberts till later on," urged Keefe. "Believe me, this is truly in his interests, much more so than you have any idea of."

Mrs. Petworth, having made her promise and her stipulation, remained under the impression formed already, that Katreen had, after all, more regard for Roberts than she had allowed to appear to her friends. Had she really been influenced solely by her unwillingness to grieve her aunt? Mrs. Petworth had suspected this, though she had not thought it a sufficient reason for the girl's peculiar conduct. In any case, she resolved not to mention this new appeal of Roberts, through another, to Lady Patrick, but to leave the matter for the present in the hands of the girl herself.

On returning to his lodgings that night Keefe's first impulse was to write to Fandango, stating the whole case and calling on him to bring Stine to Paris and at once convict Mattie of imposture. But on reflection he decided to use less rough means to obtain justice, and that it would be better for all concerned to persuade Mattie to confess her fault and to have restitution made as quietly as possible. It

might be supposed that a mistake had arisen, Mattie might be screened somehow from disgrace, and a scandal would be avoided.

And so he resolved to take no step until he had seen Mattie again, and heard the explanation that she had offered to make to him.

Mattie meanwhile had become bodily ill with misery, and had taken to her bed, much to the distress of Lady Patrick, who was seriously uneasy about the delicate state of her niece's health. She confessed her anxiety to Mrs. Petworth when that lady came to see her with the intention of having a few private words with Mattie as to Keefe's request for an interview.

Mrs. Petworth also was alarmed at learning of Mattie's illness, and felt all the more desirous of being a means of restoring peace to the girl's so evidently distracted mind.

“I will leave you alone with her,” said Lady Patrick. “I have known you to have a soothing effect on her nerves before. My coaxing and petting only seem to irritate her, though Heaven knows I think of little besides her health and her happiness.”

Mrs. Petworth seized her opportunity, and, as she sat by Mattie's bed, exerted all her gentle power of sympathy in trying to get at the source of the girl's uneasiness, and in suggesting a means of removing it.

“My dear,” she said, “I am afraid you have been worried about something. I thought the other evening that our new acquaintance Mr. Kavanagh rather presumed on his introduction to you. As a friend of Arthur Roberts he may have had good intentions that led him into speaking to you of matters on

which it would have been wiser to keep silent. If I make a mistake in saying this, correct me."

Mattie did not speak. There was some relief in the suggestion that Keefe's conversation with her had reference to Mr. Roberts. By humouring it she might gain a little time.

"I perceive that I have been right," said Mrs. Petworth, "and I may now tell you that Mr. Kavanagh is anxious to speak to you again. I have promised to let him see you at my house unless you refuse to do so."

"I am willing to see him," said Mattie.

"And I beg, my child, that you will not shut your ears to his assurances of the worthiness of his friend. You will remember that your aunt is not so selfish as to think of offering any serious obstacle to your happiness."

When Mrs. Petworth had gone, Mattie turned her face to the wall and moaned for the network of deceit in which she was caught, a net woven round her by her ambition, her selfishness, and her cowardice. As she reviewed her position she saw that as cowardice still held her in thrall there was nothing left for her but to descend into deeper depths of falsehood. The explanation that she had promised to Keefe could be only a shameful perversion of the truth, a series of lies which might be the means of establishing her claim to be the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick.

She moaned over her own degradation even while she resolved on the dishonest course which she now saw as the only one open to her. She wept bitter tears as she thought of how much more fortunate, even in a worldly way, she would have been, with Roberts

loving her, and with friends new and old, gathered round her, if only she had kept to the straight course, and had remembered the words of her poor, upright, toiling mother—words that were now ringing in her ears like the notes of a deathbell: “Do it honest, Mattie! However you strive and push yourself on in the world, my girl, do it honest!”

CHAPTER XLI

Keefe's Disbelief

MATTIE now looked no farther than the moment that would follow after her triumph over Keefe. He had come to destroy her and she would not be destroyed. Of the wrong she would do to Stine she was determined not to allow herself to think. Was not Stine again proved the fortunate one, as she had always been; rich in the devotion of this Keefe, who was now a man of distinction, fostered still by the wealthy Fandango, saved from temptation and evildoing, innocent of everything that would lower her in the eyes of lover or of friends? Was she, Mattie, to give her up the position which she had so hardly won by so much suffering and held under such cruel fear? No, the time had gone past when she might have forced herself to do it. She had neither the moral nor physical force within her to enable her to speak the words that would condemn her for ever to the odium and contempt of her world.

She had so often rehearsed her lesson, dwelt on the possibility that she might actually be Stine and Stine might be Mattie, imagined the situation as a fiction that might appear as truth, that it did not seem so difficult to put it before others in a few bold words —nothing like so difficult as, even without any words, to admit her guilt.

When she met Keefe at Mrs. Petworth's tea-table in the English room where so much of her time had been spent in her earliest days in Paris, when she had been envious and ambitious but had descended to no actual deceit to advance herself, her face had a hard expression at which Mrs. Petworth wondered.

"There is something of mystery in it all," thought the good old lady. "I cannot understand it."

Mattie had put on a rich dress of soft grey green and a plumed hat of a deep splendid crimson, and wore a fantastic jewel given her by Lady Partick. Keefe should be impressed by this material evidence of her position and prosperity, and of the confident faith in her of those whom she claimed as her relatives. At the same time she looked worn and ill, and the beauty which had developed in her days of triumph was already impaired by the constant pressure of bitter anxiety. Keefe, however, who had not seen her in those brilliant days, was struck by the extraordinary transformation of Mattie Milsom of the London tenement into a lady of distinction and refinement. The hard look in the eyes which surprised and pained Mrs. Petworth gave him no surprise, but he pitied her for the occasional gleam of fear which they shot towards him. Mattie was no practised actress for all her experience, and he wondered, as he drank his tea and tried to appear unembarrassed, how this audacious young impostor could venture to attempt an explanation of her conduct.

"I have letters to write," said Mrs. Petworth. "You will excuse me for a little." She left the room full of hope that she was opening a way to happiness for two who were kept apart by misunderstanding.

As soon as she was gone Mattie began to tremble and look terrified, but controlled herself with extraordinary effort.

"Miss Milsom," said Keefe, "I have come here to listen to the explanation you promised me. Let me have it as soon as possible."

"My name is not Milsom," said Mattie, her courage reviving at the challenge. "Stine, the girl who was called nobody's daughter, was the child of Joss Milsom the sailor, and I am the child he saved from the shipwreck."

"When did you discover this?" asked Keefe, with incredulous eyes fixed on her trembling lips.

"Just before my father's—my reputed father's death. All belonging to him were dead or gone away, and for two years I remained near him, seeing him often in the home and hearing all he had to tell me."

"And he told you what you tell me now? Did he give you any reason for denying his own child and putting her in the place of a foundling?"

"No sufficient reason. His mind had been weakened."

"Have you any evidence to bring forward?"

"The people in the home will tell you that he left me the old coat that used to hang by his bed. In it were sewn papers—a statement—and a pearl necklace that was on the neck of the infant he saved from drowning. He had kept these for me."

"Where are the papers?"

Mattie hesitated. "Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick has them."

"And they identify you as the child he saved?"

"They make a statement."

"I must see that statement."

Mattie quailed for a moment.

"My aunt will not listen to you. She will not hand over her private family papers to a stranger who makes a wild attack on me."

Keefe sat silent for a few moments with his eyes fixed on the girl's face.

"Now, Mattie Milsom," he said presently, "I do not believe one word of what you are telling me."

At the same time the sub-conscious self that often makes strange suggestions to the full conscious mind whispered a question as to whether it might not be possible that Mattie was speaking truth. If so she was in a difficult position, as being aware that she had no evidence of any living person concerning what had passed between the old man and herself on his death-bed. Except for that piece of writing—whatever it might be—there could be nothing.

"Until I see the statement you say Lady Patrick holds I shall entirely disbelieve you," he repeated.

"You are horribly cruel," said Mattie. "Stine is rich and prosperous; you are clever and distinguished and will make a fortune. You and she are happy in each other, and you want to take me from my friends, my birthright, and everything that has been given to me at last after years of loneliness and struggle."

"I wish to take nothing from you that is yours," said Keefe. "As you say, Stine and I are happy in each other, and no change in her fortunes could make her dearer or less dear to me than she is. But as a matter of fact she is neither rich nor prosperous. Since Fandango lost his voice he is poor. Stine has been contented with his poverty, and she is a daughter

to him. Her present condition has nothing to do with the question of who is the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, and who the child of old Joss Milsom. Stine will be in Paris very soon, and I warn you that I shall leave no stone unturned to have that question satisfactorily answered before the world."

Mattie had perceived, even in the inflection of his voice, the presence of that flitting doubt as to whether or not her story might be truth or falsehood, and a momentary increase of daring enabled her to stand up and say boldly:

"Then I leave you to pursue your investigations, Mr. Kavanagh, and perhaps you will be able to assure my friends that you are really Keefe Stonewall, and how you pretend to know anything of me and of my circumstances. I will bid you good afternoon."

Then she turned away and moved across the room with that air of hauteur which was one of her acquirements, and went to report the close of her interview with the friend of Arthur Roberts.

"Nothing is changed," she said. "Mr. Kavanagh has some strange ideas on more subjects than one. I wonder whether he is perfectly sound in mind."

"My dear," said Mrs. Petworth, "you are speaking of an exceptionally clever man."

"Exceptionally clever people are not always sound in mind on every subject," said Mattie.

Mrs. Petworth saw that her lips were white and trembling in spite of her evident efforts at composure, and her heart sank at the suggestion forced on her that something was very wrong somewhere to account for such distress and such obstinate reserve.

"Katreen," she said, "forgive one who loves you

for saying that it is too much for a girl like you to have a painful secret, unshared, on her mind. Take my advice and confide in a friend."

"There is positively nothing that I could confide," said Mattie. "Mr. Kavanagh and Mr. Roberts will leave me in peace, I hope, in future."

"I am sorry this interview has not ended more pleasantly," said Mrs. Petworth.

"Oh, it will be all right!" said Mattie. "I trust there will be no more trouble; and please do not say anything to my aunt."

After she had gone Mrs. Petworth returned to Keefe, but found him as reserved and unsatisfactory as Katreen herself.

"I have done my best to help them," thought the good lady, "and I will take no further step without the knowledge and consent of Moya."

Keefe spent all that night in reviewing the situation in his mind, giving a fair hearing to that whispering doubt as to whether it might not be possible after all that Mattie's extraordinary story was true. All the circumstances of Stine's history, as he had known it, were extraordinary, and Mattie's individual developments were equally strange and unusual. The confession which she alleged the old man had made to her was not more unlikely than the mere fact that the child saved by old Milsom had been discovered to be the daughter of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick's sister. The details of the discovery Keefe had learned from Mrs. Petworth; the pearl necklace mentioned by Mattie was a fact, and if the statement accompanying it should bear out Mattie's story, then how could he, Keefe, or anyone else find evidence to disprove the

man's idea that his own child had been brought up as a foundling, and the foundling as his own child?

Some ingenious persons might suggest that it was a cunning scheme to ensure the dowry of the pearl necklace for his daughter, and allow the little foundling to suffer the life of hardship which seemed in store for the children of Mrs. Milsom, the poor stitcher of the tenement. This appeared to supply a reason for the old man's cunning, but it could only have value as coming after complete proof of his having so acted, and having confessed, as Mattie had asserted that he had confessed.

Mattie refused to help him to see the statement. If such evidence of her honesty existed, would she not have hastened to place it before him? Seeing that she had refused, he could not, of course, get sight of the document without laying the whole painful case before Lady Fitzpatrick.

For a time this seemed to him the only sensible course, and he had almost resolved to take it without delay. But on further reflection he felt inclined to obtain evidence from other sources which would show the statement—if indeed it were in existence and in Mattie's favour—to be the cunning falsehood he believed it to be.

Before he slept he had made up his mind to go to London, visit the home where old Milsom died, and have a talk with Sib Stonewall, the only person he could think of who would remember all about the Milsoms, and would at least give him her own impressions of the case and her counsel as to his proceeding in so delicate and so important a matter.

CHAPTER XLII

Unable to Feel Joy

WHEN Mattie was again alone with her thoughts, looking her situation in the face, the words: "Stine will be in Paris very soon," kept ringing in her ears. Nothing else that Keefe had said remained in her mind with such intolerable distinctness. She had dreaded meeting Keefe, but now her fear of meeting Stine amounted to terror.

While the girl who had been called "nobody's daughter" was a creature of the past, far removed into some vague, remote sphere, a being whose very existence was uncertain, she, Katreen St. Hilary, could determine to hold possession of the place she had gained in the world; but it would require more courage and resolution than she was yet assured of to stand up in the presence of the young woman she was wronging, and continue to maintain an attitude of falsehood."

"I am you and you are me." That is what it would come to, and Stine would know that she was speaking and acting a lie. Yet she must go on and on in the miserable course she had adopted. At what moment could she stop and cry out to her friends the amazing news: "I have been all along guilty of

shameful betrayal of your trust in me. I am a liar, an impostor, and a thief!"

To avoid meeting Stine seemed to be now her most urgent necessity, and when Lady Patrick proposed to take her to some foreign country, as a change supposed to be good for her health, she grasped eagerly at the opportunity for escape from impending disaster.

"Stine will very soon be in Paris," she thought, "and I shall be out of it before she arrives."

She reflected that it would be easy to get permission to remain abroad on different pleas: perhaps to improve herself in foreign languages, to study painting, or as proposing to gather materials for a book. She knew that Lady Patrick would, in her motherly solicitude, approve of any plan that would better her niece's spirits, and in that way might prove a benefit to her failing health.

"It will give me time," thought Mattie, as she hastened the packing of her trunks. "And if, after all, I am driven to the worst, I will run away and hide, and be heard of no more. I could never bring myself to face them all and admit the truth, could never bear their astonishment, their disgust, their anger, and their contempt!"

The question was one of where to go. Anywhere in France was too near to Paris. The Egyptian desert would be a safe place, only she had not got rid of the idea that Stine and her adopted father were there. Keefe had not told her where they were at present, merely stating that they were coming to Paris. What if, by running away from them, she should happen to meet them on the way? Greece might do: the island of Crete would be rather an unlikely spot for meeting

undesirable acquaintances by chance, and curiosity about the excavations would supply a sufficient reason for the choice of it as a place of sojourn. Then there was Italy and its attractive nooks and corners, where one could easily lose oneself; and there was Spain. Mrs. Petworth, who was to be one of the party, had friends in Spain: a girl in whom she was interested, called Rosethorne, was learning to be an artist in Toledo.

Mattie was particularly anxious that Mrs. Petworth should accompany them, and that they should start before Keefe had carried out his intention of accusing her to her friends. He had written her a private note (conveyed by Mrs. Petworth, who believed it to be concerned with the affairs of Roberts) in which he gave her a few weeks to consider her position and to make up her mind to take the first step in the matter of resigning her pretensions to the birthright of Stine.

In case Mrs. Petworth remained behind till the promised weeks had elapsed, Keefe might open his attack by giving information to the kindly woman who had been Mattie's earliest friend in Paris. But by securing her as one of the travelling party that imminent danger would be avoided. And if he pursued them with letters, Mattie, who could recognize his handwriting, would seize and destroy them before they came under the eyes of her companions. Thus in desperation did Mattie's imagination work on her cruel situation, and lay plans for even a temporary escape. Of the future after her return to Paris, and of all that might await her there, she did not dare to think.

As she moved about the princess's chamber where
(C 681)

she had now reigned so long, directing her maid and seeing to the packing of all the pretty things provided for her wear and her use—charming frocks and hats and stylish coats, smart shoes, dozens of delicate gloves, and all the pretty etceteras of a prosperous young lady's exquisite trousseau—she acknowledged to herself that she loathed them as the wretched price of her misery. How gladly would she have given them all, and gone in rags, in exchange for a peaceful mind and an innocent conscience! Yet she was planning to grow more guilty every day, rushing forward into deeper depths of falsehood and wrongdoing—and not now for greed or ambition, or even for love of power and luxury, but only from the most detestable cowardice.

She suffered, too, in the more thorough awakening of her heart. The interest taken in the smallest thing concerning her by these two loving friends who were always providing for her happiness, Lady Patrick's tender solicitude for her health and keen anxiety for her weakened nerves and unaccountable depression, the sacrifices made to ensure her the change believed to be necessary for her—all impressed her as amazing proofs of the unselfish goodness of others, as contrasted with her own covetous egotism. Love for those who showered such proofs of affection on her grew and strengthened in her.

“Too late, alas!” she moaned in the solitude of the nights, when no one could see her lonely tears or hear her sobs.

It was decided to spend the remainder of the winter in Italy, and to enjoy there the beauty of the early springtime. Florence, the winter city, was chosen

as the first place of sojourn. Mattie was uneasy at being located in a spot so central for travellers, and was relieved when, at Mrs. Petworth's suggestion, the party moved out to Fiesole and established themselves at San Girolamo, in the delightful hospice of the busy and cheerful sisters who are known as the "Blue Nuns" to many a grateful English traveller.

Here, in a charming room of her own that looked like a very nest of peace, Mattie folded for the moment the weary wings of her unrest.

The hospice is an old monastic building whose gardens, planted with grey olive trees, run up the hill behind it to the monastery of the Franciscans which crowns the height. The view from Mattie's windows, as she saw it on her first evening, was enchanting. The valley of the Arno, far down, lay spread before her, the whole city of Florence was at her feet. There were the domes and towers made so familiar to her by pictures. The sun set behind the hills at the opposite side of the valley, and after its pageant was over the innumerable electric lights came out like stars all over the widespread city. But Mattie looked out on the glorious scene with a heavy heart, and with a sick consciousness of her bitter loss in being unable to feel joy in so much beauty.

The little party settled down to spend a month in this happy house, the elder ladies charmed with their quarters. The change of climate was pleasant; November seemed like late summer—roses in the hedges, hot sunshine all day, and in the evening enough of chill to make a fire of resinous pine cones and logs of wood very acceptable. The place was so quiet and

dignified, with its air of peace and retirement and its glorious outlook. There was a charm in the long wide corridors, floored in the Tuscan way with varnished tiles and with a strip of matting down the centre, the walls hung with fine old prints, and portraits, and pictures of sacred subjects. To reach the dining-room and drawing-room the visitors traversed the vaulted cloister of a little court with a porticoed well in the centre—a walk made bright with chrysanthemums, bamboos, and palms. Off this charming cloister, apart from all the brightness and comfort, was a dim, quiet chapel which impressed Mattie with awe, and made her afraid of her own warring thoughts.

It was impossible to feel afraid of Sister Brighida, who was Mattie's attendant, a strong rosy Irishwoman, despite her Italian name; for the Blue Nuns are no foreigners, but grow up like shamrocks in the island of tears to transplant themselves among the roses and violets of Italy for the comfort of wayfarers. Mattie had never known anything about "Sisters", but she soon began to watch eagerly for the appearance of the dark-draped figure with white bands and blue stole, and the eyes that in repose had something of the gravity of that dim, quiet chapel which she feared to enter—eyes, however, that brimmed over with joyous smiles at a word or a look. She was ten years older than Mattie, yet the girl felt herself aged in the presence of this woman of earnest intent and lovely experiences, the purity of whose soul had kept her fresh as a child while the years were passing over her.

Sister Brighida was the daughter of a Kerry farmer, who had received a good plain education, and she

was qualified to give lessons in Italian to the young English lady, as well as to attend to her personal comforts. Mattie made the lessons, which were chiefly of conversation, an excuse for spending a good deal of time in her own room, a chamber partly furnished as a sitting-room, and made so attractive and so comfortable that any person of moderate desires and ideal tastes might covet to make a dwelling in it for the rest of a life that had sadly experienced homelessness and had done with wandering.

At Mattie's age it was not natural that she should feel a wish to remain in one place for the rest of her life, unless impelled by the same impulse to expend herself in charity to others as had led Sister Brigida into her cloistered home and kept her there as happy as a bird on the wing. And Mattie was far from even the comprehension of such an attitude of mind. Still, this quiet nest of peace in the midst of beauty soon became as a sanctuary to her, and the strong, sweet woman who came and went in it was like a protecting angel warding off the dangers that were threatening her outside the door.

“God love you, my dear!” was Sister Brigida’s frequent salutation, and Mattie listened for the words, feeling as if a saving spell were being woven by them around her, to rescue her from the spirit of evil that had got possession of her will.

How could God love her, and what had she ever done to obtain His love?

“I am not good,” she said one day, with an unusual impulse of honesty, in reply to the benignant greeting.

“You are depressed because you are not well,”

said Sister Brigida. "But the good God who loves you will cure you of your unhappiness."

Mattie burst into tears. Was it possible that this comfortable prediction might prove to be true? Could it be that through all these erring years God had kept a fatherly watch over her, intending to lead her waywardness in the end into the paths of real happiness?

"Alas! Sister Brigida does not know the creature she is talking to," thought Mattie. "How she would turn her truthful face away from me if I were to put myself before her in my genuine colours! And yet, if I could go on my knees and confess to anyone, it would be to Sister Brigida. If she were ever so disgusted and horrified I believe she would be pitying and merciful. But I could not do it."

After some time Lady Patrick and Mrs. Petworth perceived that Katreen's health did not improve. The climate of Italy was not strengthening to her nerves. She moped in her seclusion at Fiesole, and found no pleasure in visiting the galleries and churches which to them were so full of charm and interest. So they resolved to continue their travels. Mattie made no objection. She believed that Stine and Keefe were by this time in Paris awaiting her return. As for herself, she was tired of Florence, and thought she might as well be miserable in one part of the world as in another.

CHAPTER XLIII

“I will Make them Proud of Me”

WHEN Keefe had talked to Mrs. Stonewall and thought over all the circumstances of this painful affair, in which he was so strangely involved and called on to act, he still felt unwilling to come forward and denounce Mattie without seeing a little farther. Sib, on hearing all the story, had suggested that Stine's evidence would be important, and that she ought to be consulted in a matter so completely for herself. He acknowledged that there remained two things only to be done; to talk to Stine, and to ask to see the statement of Joss Milsom on which Mattie relied for the support of her case.

He made up his mind that he ought to talk to Stine before approaching the relatives who had been deceived into putting another in her place, and he again confided the charge of his own affairs to Castellan, and left Paris for Toledo.

He had little difficulty in making an excuse to Fandango for having deserted his own pressing business to pay them a flying visit; and after a pleasant morning, spent all three together, he as easily found an opportunity of talking alone with Stine, sitting on a seat in the Zocodover under the wintry starlight.

He went straight to the point.

"Stine," he said, "I have a very strange story to tell you."

Stine was startled. "Nothing unfortunate has happened to you?" she said quickly.

"No, thank God!" said Keefe. "The story concerns yourself. You remember Mattie Milsom?"

"Of course I remember her. I have often asked if you had heard anything about her."

"I have seen her. She is in Paris, pretending to be you."

"What do you mean?"

"She says that you are her father's child, and that she was rescued from drowning by old Milsom, and brought up as his daughter."

"But it is not true. Why should she imagine such a thing?"

"Because your relatives have been found, and she has grasped at the advantages which are your birth-right."

"I can't understand," said Stine. "Where did she find these people, and who are they? And how did they come to accept her as belonging to them?"

Keefe then told in a few words the extraordinary accident that had thrown Mattie into the arms of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick. All the story, as he had heard it from Mrs. Petworth, from Roberts, and from Mattie herself was put before Stine, who asked many questions as the links were fitted together, and when all was told sat silent in amazement.

"It is wonderful!" she said at last. "Certainly I was led to believe that I was 'nobody's daughter', the child that good old Joss Milsom had saved from drowning."

“And most certainly you are,” said Keefe.

“But,” said Stine, “if he made this confession to Mattie and gave her a statement—”

“If he did,” said Keefe. “Can anyone believe such a tale without proof?”

“The statement—”

“We have not seen it. And even should it exist, who can say that it was not written by Mattie herself?”

“Why do you suggest that she could be so dishonest?”

“I believe she is thoroughly dishonest.”

“But you say the necklace is a fact, and why doubt the rest of her account of all that happened since we have known her?”

“It is not a matter of doubt to me. I entirely disbelieve it all,” said Keefe, beginning to chafe at the attitude Stine was taking up. “You ought to be able to remember much that would prove your own position and Mattie’s in the Milsom family.”

“I am younger than Mattie,” said Stine, “and my earliest recollections all bear out my impression that I was the foundling, and that the elder girl was the child of the people who had fostered me. But I cannot prove it.”

“The baptismal register of Matilda Milsom is dated nearly two years earlier than the loss of the vessel in which your parents were drowned.”

“But suppose that Matilda Milsom were me, and that Mattie is really a year and a half younger than me! At our age who could tell which of us is twenty and which only eighteen and a half?”

“She looks much older than you—more than the

difference. But that is of little consequence. Sib Stonewall remembers you both as children."

"Of course. It is strange that good old Milsom should have played such a trick. But if he did——"

"It seems to me that you are not at all anxious to find your mother's sister, and to be restored to the position and the fortune that are your right."

"Of course I should be anxious if I were assured that this lady is my mother's sister. As I am not sure of it, and as another is convinced by sufficient evidence that she is the lady's niece, I cannot feel ready to accuse my old companion Mattie of what would seem to me a crime."

"Then others must be interested for you," said Keefe. "I confess I can't understand your indifference."

"I am very happy as I am," said Stine. "I belong to you and to the dear old man who has been a true father to me. I am not anxious to be lifted into a position that might separate me from you both, even if the struggle to gain it did not involve the ruin of the character of another."

"It shall not separate you from me," said Keefe.

"Answer me truly, Keefe. Would you care for me and value me more as the niece of a Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, the owner of a pearl necklace and other rich possessions, than you have always done. Now, don't be angry! I know you wouldn't; and if it is only for my sake that you want to make a great lady of me, do put it out of your head, and let us leave Mattie in possession of what she has claimed as her own."

"I am glad you say you know I wouldn't. Can

you not feel that though I would rather have you all my own I feel bound to insist that justice be done?”

“You are not sure that justice would be done by your accusing Mattie.”

“I am morally sure of it, and I intend to put the matter to absolute proof. If you refuse to help me I must appeal to Fandango and to Mrs. Petworth, who is your friend.”

“And who, you tell me, is also the friend of Mattie, whom she believes to be Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick’s niece. You will place her in a great difficulty.”

“I am aware of that, but I cannot help it. I have often thought it strange that Mrs. Petworth should have continued to be the friend of both, and yet never have by any chance suggested to Mattie that the girl in Toledo for whom she had so much affection was Stine.”

“She would always speak of me as Miss Rose-thorne. As for my Christian name, she made it Christina, as more really Christian. Besides, there was always a certain reserve about Mrs. Petworth in speaking of her friends. She kept them in her heart, but she didn’t chatter and gossip about them as some people do. I think I told you that though she knew Señor Fandango was not my uncle, she abstained from asking me all questions about my antecedents, seeing that I shrank from such a confidence.”

“Why did you shrink?”

“Because the man who was a father to me required that silence.”

“The old humbug!” burst forth Keefe.

“Don’t!” said Stine, tears starting in her eyes. “He had his faults, as we now perceive, but then

I did not know. And now, when there is a question of handing me over to strange people, I cannot but feel that I owe everything to him, even the friendship of Mrs. Petworth herself, whom I never should have met if he had not taken me by the hand."

"And who would never have allowed you to meet me again, if he could have prevented it. Oh, Stine, my dearest, don't cry! We have forgiven him, and I don't want to punish him. You will see how proud and glad he will be when he hears that you are no longer 'nobody's daughter', but have an enviable place of your own in the world among your relatives."

"Then I shall have lost those who loved me, and who will be glad, as you say, to give me up; and I shall go over to people who are strangers to me, and who have grown to love another, regarding her as their own, whom I shall dispossess and bring to disgrace. That is putting at the best the cause you are taking up. But I cannot believe that Mattie is so criminal."

Finding that he could not move Stine from this attitude of mind, Keefe resolved to open the matter to Fandango, who would be in sympathy with him, and whose testimony would be of value in the eyes at least of Mrs. Petworth, who had first made his acquaintance in a London hotel in company with Stine as his niece and adopted daughter. Stine's letters from Toledo, giving tardy information of her early years, would bear out the claim to be made of her identity with the Katreen St. Hilary now personated by an impostor, one Mattie Milsom.

"Allow me to speak to him alone," said Keefe. "I cannot run the risk of your influencing him with

your peculiar views. He knows nothing about Mattie, and your faith in her and tender pity for her cannot be shared by him.”

So he seized an opportunity to invite Fandango to have a walk and a smoke with him, while Stine was busy about some household arrangements. Having found Stine so impracticable, he hardly knew what to expect from Fandango. Some time ago he had been afraid that the old man would be so eager to run to meet Stine’s good fortune that his own more prudent movements might be embarrassed. But Stine’s indifference in the matter had made him feel that he must have some assistance and sympathy in the undertaking he had put before him.

They smoked in silence for some time, while Keefe considered how he might sound his companion’s feelings in the case, before venturing to put it plainly before him. At last he said:

“I wonder how you would take it if relatives of Stine’s should turn up and claim her from you.”

“Not the least fear of it,” said Fandango, with a puff of smoke. “Not after all these years. Besides, they were all drowned, you know.”

“Her parents, yes. But ‘parents’ usually have sisters and brothers. And time has a way of ploughing the world incessantly, so much in a day, so much in a year, and all kinds of buried things get turned up in the most unexpected manner.”

“What do you mean? Are you romancing, or is anyone threatening to deprive us of Stine?”

“Nobody could or should deprive me of her, and I dare say you would keep a fast hold of her also.”

“But what are you dreaming about? If her people

did turn up they would probably be a beggarly lot, and we need not take any notice of them."

"They have turned up, and they are not a beggarly lot. They are people of distinction, and we must not allow her to remain 'nobody's daughter', ought not to deny her her name and her honourable lineage."

"This is tall talk, young man. If these people are in existence, and want her, why do they not write to me?"

"Because they have been deceived."

Keefe then explained the matter fully, informing Fandango of all the circumstantial details of the case. The old man listened with intense interest, and when asked if he remembered Mattie Milsom he threw away his cigar and burst into an explosion of laughter.

"Remember that stubborn, slatternly girl, who looked black at Stine's good fortune? Well do I remember it all! A few years ago mean only yesterday to a man of my age. Her own mother complained that the ugly, untidy girl was no help or use to her, while Stine was as her right hand."

"Mattie's pretension is that Stine was Mrs. Milsom's own daughter, and that she herself was the foundling. She is not ugly or untidy now, but a young woman of very good looks, and dressed like a princess. Stine's aunt, Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, has accepted her in Stine's place."

"I am not sure that I don't want to leave her there," said Fandango pathetically. "If they get her it will be goodbye to poor old Fandango, the broken-down singer. And I don't quite understand you, my boy. Do you think that, clever as you are, you are likely

to be accepted as a proper match for the niece and only child and heiress of a Lady Patrick Anybody?”

“I will make them proud of me,” said Keefe, holding up his head. “But if Stine, in new circumstances and under new worldly conditions, should choose to cut me off, she should do it. I think she wouldn’t.”

“Ah, my boy, you don’t know the world as I know it! Many years ago the world lifted me on its shoulders, made a king of me, poured out its money at my feet, invited me to its banquets, for no reason except that I ministered to its pleasure; now that I am, I hope, a better man, but without any of the qualities they value, those who sought me so flatteringly know me no more.”

“Do you mean to put Stine before me as ‘the world’?” said Keefe, with a little smile.

“She will have to live in the world and with the world, and she may be obliged to be subject to its rules.”

“Even if we did not trust her to deal with such a world as you describe, we could not dare to be so selfish as to fail in the effort to do her justice. I will ask you to think it all over, sir, and let me know what you intend to do, or not to do. If you refuse to help me I shall have to fight the battle alone.”

Fandango did think it over, and after some hours he began to see the matter from other points of view than that which he had already taken up. His first impulse to keep hold of Stine, to refuse to deliver her over to strangers, no longer ruled him. He perceived that in a few years, at best, he should be forced to give her to Keefe; and all his experience of this adopted child of his rose up to assure him that wher-

ever she might live in future, as Keefe's wife or as the daughter and heiress of distinguished people, she would never forget or neglect the protector of her childhood who had been a father to her.

Then, despite his condemnation of "the world" as his later years had proved it, he began to have pleasant recollections of "great" people, and to admit to himself that it might possibly be delightful to see Stine placed high as a lady of distinction, moving in aristocratic circles, and introducing her old daddy-uncle to those noble relatives who could not but be grateful to him for having done for her what they themselves had been unable to do.

Before twenty-four hours were over he had brought himself to the point of heartily agreeing with Keefe that something must be done. Then discussions followed about what the something was to be, what first steps were to be taken. Was Mrs. Petworth to be consulted at once, or ought Lady Patrick to be first approached by interview or by letter, and by whom—by Stine herself, or by Keefe, or by Fandango? Or would it be more in proper order to employ a lawyer?

Fandango, being once thoroughly roused, was now in favour of conducting the affair on the most conventional and most public lines. The old strain of a certain vulgarity of which adversity had freed him was on the return, and the prospect of a *cause célèbre* in which he would play an important part was not quite displeasing to him.

Keefe had now to make strenuous efforts to hold him back. He proposed to take Stine at once to Paris and open the campaign; but to this both Keefe and Stine objected, and it was resolved at last that Keefe

must return alone to Paris and make a private communication to Mrs. Petworth.

On arriving in Paris, however, he found that Mrs. Petworth had gone abroad to travel for some months with Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick and her niece.

“So we must only wait till they return,” wrote Keefe.

Stine was glad of this news, but Fandango, now ready for war, was impatient of the delay.

CHAPTER XLIV

Mrs. Petworth Incredulous

ONE morning when Fandango was smoking in the Zocodover, on one of the public seats, ruminating in his own way on the strange circumstances of which Keefe had made him aware, he saw a lady approach the door of his house, a figure that was familiar to him.

The grey hair, the mild and grave yet pleasant face, the air of refinement, and a certain suggestion of serious intention were not to be forgotten. It was Mrs. Petworth.

Fandango threw away his cigar and went to meet her. Had the important discovery been already made, and had she come to claim Stine for her relatives and take her away from him?

With a pang of pain and a thrill of triumph he bowed over the lady's hand and invited her into his house.

After the first words of greeting and welcome he waited for her to speak on the all-important matter which had brought her to Toledo. But Mrs. Petworth betrayed no consciousness of any unusual occurrence in the lives of her friends. Her manner was as gentle and imperturbable as ever, and the kindly warmth in

her eyes expressed no feeling more exciting than gratification at the meeting of friends.

"You and Christina have hidden yourself so long that I have had to come in search of you," she said.

"She will be delighted. I am sorry she is not here at present. She goes every day to paint in Mr. Fisher's studio at the Puerta del Cambron. In winter the mornings are particularly precious. What a pity you did not warn us of your coming! She would have been here expecting you."

"I was not sure of our movements. I am travelling with my friends, Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick and her young niece, Miss St. Hilary. Now that we are here I shall be glad to make my two dear girls acquainted with each other—Katreen is an attractive creature, and has a romantic history which will be interesting to Christina."

Fandango sat silent, in astonishment. Was he to allow this misunderstanding to go on? He had promised Keefe to take no headlong step, to wait patiently on the movements of prudence.

"I hope you will not object to a visit from these friends of mine," continued Mrs. Petworth, a little surprised at his silence. "Katreen is coming here to meet Christina. I have not mentioned your name, as Christina has told me of your dislike to meeting strangers."

"Quite right!" said Fandango, with a wave of the hand. "Put the brokendown old singer out of the question. I shall keep out of the way when your friends make their appearance. When may they be expected to arrive?"

"Oh, Señor, you misunderstand me! They would

be only too pleased if you would receive them. They are to call here for me in about an hour, and I hope——”

Fandango made an exclamation which his visitor could not understand. She feared she had somehow offended him, and began to think she ought to retire and write a letter of explanation to Stine, asking her to come to the hotel. Fandango was perhaps touchy on the subject of his failure and his poverty. But meanwhile the man was asking himself how he ought to act in the crisis that was now imminent.

“Pray, do not think of going, Mrs. Petworth,” he said as she seemed about to rise. “Your friends shall be made welcome. Stine will soon return, and a meeting between her and your young lady may prove fortunate. And while we wait will you be so good as to tell me that romantic story of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick’s niece to which you have alluded.”

“Willingly,” said Mrs. Petworth, feeling more at ease. “It is very well known now, and I thought you might have heard of it.”

“Toledo is an out-of-the-world place, and far from London and Paris. We know little here of what goes on in the fashionable world that has forgotten us. Yet I have heard that Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick has been made happy by the discovery of a long-lost niece who was supposed to have been drowned.”

“That is the truth. The accidents that led to the discovery are the most wonderful part of the story. Lady Patrick’s sister and her husband were returning from India with their infant daughter when their vessel was wrecked. It was believed that the child was lost with the parents. But she was saved by an

old sailor who took her home and brought her up as his own child——”

“Old Joss Milsom, who died in a charitable home in the East End of London,” said Fandango.

“I see you know all about it,” said Mrs. Petworth, surprised.

“I do. I know a great deal more about it all than either you or Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick,” said Fandango, giving the rein to his indignation and impatience. “The girl you speak of, who was supposed to have been drowned and was saved, and was brought up by the Milsoms as their child, is Stine, my adopted daughter, given over to me by Mrs. Milsom, the poor foster-mother, because she could not provide for her own children, let alone for the foundling left on her hands.”

Mrs. Petworth sat staring at him in silence.

“Are you incredulous, Madam?” asked Fandango.

“I am quite incredulous,” said the lady. “How can I be anything but incredulous? Lady Patrick has satisfactory proof of the identity of the girl she has accepted as her niece. Katreen has told her own story, which is identical with the tale you have just told me. She produced a statement given her by the sailor Milsom before he died——”

“Stating that she was not his child, and that the girl who had been known as the foundling and called ‘nobody’s daughter’ was really his own, the mother having given away her own child to me, a stranger, and kept the foundling——”

“Stop, Señor!” said Mrs. Petworth. “I cannot follow you. I have heard no mention of another girl. You must have dreamed all this strange perversion of

the truth. Is Stine aware of it, and why have I never been told by her of these particulars of her childhood if they are true? All that she ever made known to me, and that quite lately, was the fact that you were not her uncle, but that you had found her an orphan among poor people and adopted her."

"Why?" said Fandango. "Because in my vanity and folly I wished to separate her completely from low connections, and I exacted from her a promise that she would not speak to anyone of her real antecedents."

"Is Christina aware of this strange delusion of yours?" repeated Mrs. Petworth.

"She has quite lately been informed by Keefe Kavanagh——"

"Keefe Kavanagh!"

"That her old companion of the slums, Mattie Milsom, had taken her place among her mother's relatives, whom she had discovered and cunningly deceived——"

"And Kavanagh——?"

"Recognized Mattie when he met her at your house——"

"Stay! Granted that he knew both these girls as children, it is a case of the identification of one of them as Milsom's child. There is a statement——"

"I have heard of it. Have you seen it?"

"I have seen it. But as far as I can remember it only speaks of one child, the child he rescued. There is no mention of another girl. There was a pearl necklace, besides a written paper stating that the necklace had been on the neck of the baby. It had a curious clasp, difficult to open, and inscribed in a

way which satisfied Lady Patrick that it must have been worn by the rescued infant, and that the rescued infant who wore it must have been the child of her sister. A letter from her sister established this beyond doubt."

"And Mattie, having got these things after her father's death, took possession of all, and resolved to ignore Stine, and to take her place in the world."

"Señor Fandango, you are making a very serious charge against a young woman who has been received as their relative by my friends. You will have to prove it. I am very fond of Christina, and I look on her as a much finer character than Katreen—whom I first knew as Mathilde Milsom when she came to Paris, engaged by me to act as secretary to Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick.

"She then called herself Milsom?" said Fandango. "Stine never called herself Milsom. She was known to the neighbours of the good people who fostered her as 'Nobody's Daughter'. She is the rescued child, and if the baby saved by Milsom wore a pearl necklace, that necklace is hers. And if the inscription on the clasp proves the child to be daughter of Lady Patrick's sister, then Stine is the lady's niece, and not Mattie Milsom, who has stepped into her shoes and is walking about in them."

Here Fandango's pent-up wrath broke out, and Mrs. Petworth's protestations were lost in a storm of accusations of Mattie as an impostor who ought to be prosecuted and punished by the law.

In the midst of this excitement Stine came into the room and rushed to meet Mrs. Petworth, and was received into her arms.

352 The Daughter in Possession

“Dear friend! What a joy! What a surprise!” cried Stine, forgetting all but the pleasure of such a meeting.

“Surprise indeed!” said Mrs. Petworth, holding her close, and then holding her a little way off to look at her keenly.

“I have been hearing a strange story, Christina. Let me look at you well. Truly those are the eyes of Katreen O’Dougherty, wherever you got them.”

“You have told her!” cried Stine, turning to Fandango.

“Certainly,” said Fandango. “There has been too much hesitation and delay in this matter. It is time to put things straight.”

“But, Uncle——”

“I am not your uncle. I have been a father to you; but you know well that there is no tie of blood or any kind of relationship between us. You are Katreen St. Hilary, the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick—and Mattie Milsom a little slut I remember well, complained of by her own mother.”

“You forget,” Stine returned, “that Mattie told Keefe——”

“Mattie!” said Mrs. Petworth; “Mattie told Keefe! Then she has discussed the matter with young Kavanagh?”

“And never informed you of her former acquaintance with him, I suppose?” said Fandango.

“She gave me to understand that her conversations with him were on another subject altogether,” said Mrs. Petworth.

“She told him,” persisted Stine, “that her father explained to her before his death that I was his own

child and she was the foundling. How are we to prove that she is wrong? We were all gone from London before it happened—her mother dead, Keefe departed, I far away. Besides, he gave her a statement."

"There is nothing in it bearing on this question," said Mrs. Petworth. "I have seen it. He does not say that he had substituted one child for another, or allowed his wife to send away her girl with a stranger, and keep by her one whose origin and relatives were unknown. He merely says that the child he rescued wore the pearl necklace, which he had treasured for her, and hidden lest his wife's necessities should lead her to sell it."

"And Miss Mattie closed on the pearls and posed as the foundling, whose dowry her honest old father had intended them to be," said Fandango.

"Oh, wait a little, till we hear her explanation!" pleaded Stine. "Even if she made a mistake, do not condemn her. It is impossible that she could be so guilty as you make her. When we see her she will tell us the exact truth, and we shall then be able to judge."

"That may be immediately," said Mrs. Petworth, "for I expect them to call for me here to be introduced to a young friend of mine."

CHAPTER XLV

“Do not Hate Me!”

MRS. PETWORTH had scarcely spoken when the door opened, and the Spanish maid ushered in the English ladies.

Mattie was in a coat and skirt of dark-blue cloth and a velvet hat to match, looking pale though pretty, very different indeed from the girl of the slums described by Fandango, but recognizable by Stine, who took a quick step to meet her and held out her hand.

“Mattie! I am so glad to see you! Don’t you remember me?”

Mattie’s face had turned white. She drew back a step without noticing the outstretched hand.

“No, I do not remember you,” she said faintly.

“Not remember her?” said Fandango brusquely. “Not remember ‘Nobody’s Daughter’, Miss Mattie Milsom?”

“Oh, Uncle!” said Stine. “Wait a little! We are all so changed. We have both grown up since we met. Mrs. Petworth, will you introduce me to Lady Fitzpatrick?”

Lady Patrick had hardly heard the words that had passed her ears since she entered the room. Her eyes were fixed on Stine’s glowing face, so full of sweetness and anxious sympathy. As she met her

eyes now, asking to be introduced to her, she said in a low, breathless tone to Mrs. Petworth:

“Who is this girl? Where did she come from? Tell me who she is.”

“I will tell you,” said Fandango. “She is your sister’s child, Lady Fitzpatrick.”

“Oh no!” said Lady Patrick. “That is impossible. My sister had only one child, and she is here beside me. I may have been startled by a curious likeness, but it is hardly a subject for jesting, Señor Fandango.”

“Jesting? No. There is no jest in this very serious matter. The young lady beside you is Miss Mattie Milsom, who has played you a trick, taking the place in your family and your affections that belongs to another.”

“Señor, you are under a great mistake,” said Lady Patrick. “I am assured by too many proofs that my sister’s child has been restored to me, too well assured to feel any doubt. I do not wonder that a striking likeness”—here Lady Patrick’s voice faltered as her eyes turned back again on Stine—“that a very curious likeness should have suggested to you or to someone the possibility of—of a state of things, not knowing that Providence had already—”

Lady Patrick broke down, and left her speech unfinished, while she looked from Stine to Mattie, and from Mattie back to Stine, stricken with pain at her Katreen’s silence and pallor and the fear in her eyes.

“Speak, Katreen!” she said. “Have you nothing to say to these extraordinary statements?”

Mattie’s lips moved, but no sound came from them.

"Speak, Stine!" said Fandango.

"What can I say?" said Stine. "Give Mattie time, and she will explain everything. You have given her a shock."

Lady Patrick looked at Stine gratefully and with fascinated eyes. If her sister could have had two daughters, this young stranger might be supposed to be one of them.

"I will tell you what to say," said Fandango. "Were you in your childhood known as Joss Milsom's daughter, or were you the foundling he had saved from the shipwreck?"

"I was known as the foundling," said Stine; "but Mattie says that her father told her that he had—"

Stine faltered.

"Played a trick," said Fandango. "Called his own child 'Nobody's Daughter', and pretended that the foundling was his own child. Allowed his wife to give her girl to me and to keep the stranger."

"It is what Mattie told to Keefe," said Stine; "and is it not possible? Oh, Mattie, why do you not speak, and tell us all about it? Do not be afraid of me. If Joss Milsom was my father, I am not ashamed of him. He was good and brave—"

"And honest," said Fandango, with his eyes on Mattie.

"Yes, honest," said Stine, "and I intend to be like him in that. I will not try to take from another what belongs to her."

"Right!" said Lady Patrick. "Señor Fandango has spoken of tricks. Miss Rosethorne has bravely refused to bear him out in a course of conduct which springs, I hope, only from a marvellous delusion.

Come, Katreen, let us put an end to this painful visit and return to the hotel. You will tell me the meaning of some allusions that have been made to circumstances and persons of which and of whom I have known nothing.”

But Mattie’s misery had reached its climax, and the moment had come when she could endure her own falsehood no longer. She threw up her hands with a movement of despair and cried out:

“No, no, no! I am guilty! I am guilty! Stine is the foundling. I am Mattie Milsom. I have deceived everyone. I did not mean it at first, but I was tempted when you did not let me speak. Stine had gone away and forgotten us, and I got used to being in her place; and when I had not told at first, it grew harder every day. I have done with it all now, and I am punished!”

There was deep silence in the room. Then with a sharp cry Mattie reeled round, threw out her arms before her, reached the door blindly, opened it, and was gone.

A deep sob from Lady Patrick first broke the silence that followed her disappearance.

Stine approached her, trembling, and knelt at her knees.

“Oh, my mother’s sister,” she cried, “do not hate me! You love your Katreen, and I have driven her away from you. Forgive her now, and let me remain with my good uncle. I have him, and another who loves me, and she will have no one——”

“Hush, child!” said Lady Patrick, almost sternly. “I am too deeply wounded, too much amazed. I cannot welcome you yet. But hate you—no, not with

your mother's eyes looking at me. My heart rushed to you at the first moment. I could have loved both girls had she been true—but—you the best, oh, far the best, because nature has claimed you as my own! Let me go now. I am too stunned with the suddenness of it all to be able for further discussion—here."

She glanced towards Fandango, who stood aside, but with an air of triumph threatening to burst forth in words.

Mrs. Petworth had been a silent witness of the scene, and now came forward.

"You must come back with me to the hotel now, Moya," she said.

"Ah, that unfortunate girl!" said Lady Patrick. "What can I say to her?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Petworth. "You must rest in your room or you will be ill. I will talk to Mathilde. This child will follow us later."

Fandango was reluctantly obliged to see them depart without further information from him, but after they were gone he gave vent to his triumph and also to some dissatisfaction.

"That matter was easily enough settled after all," he said. "Keefe's great prudence would have been longer about it. If I had not taken the bull by the horns——"

"Oh, Uncle, poor Mattie confessed, and she will be miserable!"

"The minx was driven to bay! Confession was not much in her mind when she walked in to us in her borrowed plumes. And I must say that I think you have been treated with great coolness. This fine lady who is your mother's sister seems in more trouble

about the little cheat who deceived her than overjoyed to discover her real niece.”

“Oh, Uncle!” cried Stine again.

“Am I your uncle still?” asked Fandango, softening.

“Of course you are my uncle,” said Stine, “unless you cast me off. You have been a father to me always, and my aunt is still a stranger to me. But you must remember that she is suffering, and must give her time to realize an amazing change.”

Later, Stine went to the hotel, and was received by Mrs. Petworth with startling news. Mattie had returned to the hotel and left it again before the ladies arrived. Lady Patrick was in bed unwell, and unaware that Mattie had disappeared.

“She thinks Mathilde is shut up in her own room,” said Mrs. Petworth, “and is trying to nerve herself to talk to her. I cannot leave her, yet I am very uneasy about Mathilde.”

“I will go in search of her,” said Stine; and she hastened away at once, her heart aching with pity for the wretched girl who had in one moment lost all her friends and her good character, and had fallen from the high fortunes which she had enjoyed for so long.

“And I, who was happy enough, am now to have everything, while she has nothing,” thought Stine, as she hurried through the streets to reach the railway station. “If she wants to escape from this place she must wait some time for a train,” she reflected. “Oh, poor Mattie! Where does she want to go, and what does she want to do with herself?”

As she had almost expected, she found Mattie hiding in a corner of a waiting-room, with a small

bag beside her containing a few necessaries snatched from her room in the hotel before she escaped from it. Her hat was pulled over her eyes, her head sunk on her breast. She looked the picture of misery and desolation.

"Mattie!" said Stine. "What are you doing here?"

"Waiting for a train," said Mattie, lifting her pale, tear-stained face and staring at Stine. "What do you want with me?"

"To bring you back with me," said Stine. "You must not go alone by the train. You are in a strange country, without friends or money."

"I will not go back to the hotel," said Mattie. "I will never see again the friends who were so good to me—the friends I deceived. I deserve their anger and contempt, but I will not face them. I have money enough to take me back to Fiesole to Sister Brigida."

"You must not go on such a journey now," said Stine. "You are not in a fit condition to travel so far alone. I will not ask you to come back to the hotel to our friends, but to come with me to the house where I live, to stay there till you are better, and till things get arranged a little."

"Back to Señor Fandango! That would be too terrible."

"You shall not see him. My little room is all my own, and I will share it with you."

"Stine, you are an angel!" cried Mattie.

"No," said Stine. "I have plenty of faults. But, Mattie, you and I were like sisters in the old, old times. We went to school together, we made mud



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“I HAVE DONE WITH IT ALL NOW, AND I AM PUNISHED”

pies together. I owe everything, even my very existence, to your good, brave, kind father and mother. Can I forget all that, and may I not stand by you now when you are in trouble?”

“Oh, Stine, you heap coals of fire on my head! I have been wicked, but I have been most miserable, and I am punished. God must have forgiven me, since he has sent you as an angel to me!” cried Mattie, bursting into a flood of weeping.

“Come with me now, dear,” said Stine coaxingly. “You will be safe with me. God has indeed forgiven you, for you have suffered and confessed. I can understand it all. I should feel just as you do if our cases were reversed.”

Mattie was at last persuaded to give up her intention of immediate flight, and to take refuge in Stine’s little chamber.

Fandango was amazed when he heard of it, but promised not to interfere. The thought flitted across his mind: “With a heart like that she will never forget the old uncle who fostered her;” and the reflection softened his indignation at having to harbour the delinquent in his house.

But Stine, having conquered, hastened back to the hotel to inform Mrs. Petworth and Lady Patrick that Mattie was safe.

CHAPTER XLVI

A Passion of Penitence

WHEN Lady Patrick and Mrs. Petworth had been assured of Mattie's safety, and Stine had returned to her companion, the two ladies whispered together their confidence on the subject of the strange discovery that had been made, seemingly by an accident.

Lady Patrick, who had recovered from the first effects of the shock, began to feel more keenly the workings of Nature in her heart, and acknowledged that instinct drew her from the first moment to Stine as her sister's child, while she had always been conscious of effort in the movements of her affection for Mathilde.

"I tried to believe that her coldness and reserve were the result of her early experiences," she said; "but I own I was often hurt by what seemed to me her distrust of me, her lack of sympathy when I talked to her about those I believed to be her parents and grandparents. I understand it all now."

"As I do also," said Mrs. Petworth. "When she was with me I noticed her want of enthusiasm and her over-caution. Very often I compared her in my mind with Stine, who had always been so warm and grateful for any kindness shown her. But at that time, poor child, she was only struggling to push

her way up in the world and say nothing about her lowly antecedents. I quite believe that she spoke truly when she said that at first she had no intention of pretending to be other than her father's daughter."

"Deceit grew out of reserve," said Lady Patrick, "and I have no doubt she suffered. I will try to believe that she would have confessed in the end, even if a strange accident had not betrayed her."

"I am certain that she did indeed suffer much," said Mrs. Petworth. "A great many things are accounted for now, things that puzzled me—her depressed spirits, her failing health. She may have persuaded herself that Stine was dead, until she met with Keefe Kavanagh."

Here Mrs. Petworth told of the private interview with Keefe which she had countenanced, thinking it was for the purpose of bringing about a good understanding with Roberts, whom Mattie had refused for some mysterious reason.

"Ah, Roberts!" said Lady Patrick. "He really loved her. Poor silly girl! She has lost a true affection. No man's tenderness could endure such a shock as the news of all this will cause him."

"It could not be expected," said Mrs. Petworth. "But, Moya, my dear, your real Katreen has shown us a noble example. We must save the poor girl from the consequences of her own fault and her own folly. You will have enough to do in gathering your sister's child to your heart, and putting her in her own place. You may leave Mathilde to me."

"We must all return to Paris at once," said Lady Patrick. "Katreen, my own Katreen, will come to her mother's sister, and Mathilde will find something

to do. We will screen her by merely stating that a mistake was made, and if her sorrow is sincere she may yet make friends. She has talents and attractions which might have won her happiness and good fortune had she been honest."

"And may yet do so," said Mrs. Petworth, "when honesty has become beautiful in her eyes and she has learned by sad experience the joy that comes of well-doing."

While those she had pained and deceived were so discussing her case, deplored her fall, and planning to protect her, Mattie sat weeping bitterly in a corner of Stine's room, refusing to believe in forgiveness or to take any comfort. All Stine's efforts failed to persuade her that she could ever be happy again. She refused to go out even for a breath of air, and dreaded to meet Fandango or to hear the sound of his voice. Her confidence in the forgiveness of God had broken down, and despair had taken possession of her. The madness and folly of her conduct were always before her eyes, and as she could not pardon herself she believed that no one, not even God, could pardon her.

After two days of struggling with Stine's determination to befriend her, she at last rose, in the morning, while Stine was absent at the hotel, and carried out her intention of escaping from Toledo, putting herself out of the reach of the friends she had outraged, and casting herself as a stranger on the world.

This time she had ascertained the hour of the departure of the train, and it carried her away from the scene of her disgrace and the climax of her intolerable misery.

She had in her bag the guidebook in which she could trace back the route of her travel from Florence, and she calculated that she had just enough money to take her there. Her desire was to get to Fiesole, and to throw herself on the mercy of Sister Brigida at San Girolamo.

“Other people talk about God,” she thought, “but Sister Brigida knows Him! She will tell me truly if I can ever dare to hope that He will forgive me.”

It was a weary journey. She had to travel in the rudest way in order to make her money last. For part of the route she had return tickets, but there were many expenses she had not counted on. Even by staying in mean places, and almost starving, she could scarcely save herself from the horror of being left penniless in some strange spot, with no one to help her or to give her a character. All the way along she met the happy faces of tourists, who looked wonderingly at the lonely girl with her white, drawn face and despairing eyes, and speculated on the sorrow that was driving her to some unhappy destination. Was it the death or fatal illness of father or mother, or someone else very dear to her? Or was it news of sudden ruin to those she loved, or of a crime——?

Such questions as these, so often put by sympathetic minds to the air concerning souls they pass in silence and haste by the way, have seldom a chance of being answered. No one could guess that this sad girl was the prosperous Miss Katreen St. Hilary of only a week ago, reduced to her own original nothingness as Mattie Milsom, fleeing from the faces of the friends she had deceived, and believing in no man’s charity or for-

giveness because of her bitter consciousness of her own unworthiness.

It was a wet, dark evening when she arrived at the gate of San Girolamo asking to see Sister Brigida. The portress who admitted her did not recognize her, but Sister Brigida came at once to receive the belated and travel-stained young stranger.

“Miss St. Hilary!” cried the Sister in astonishment, when Mattie threw back her hat and showed her unhappy face.

“No, no! Only a miserable creature come to take refuge with you!” cried the girl, and slipped down at her feet, clasping her knees.

“What have you done, you poor child?” the Sister said. “Why have you run away from your friends who love you?”

“I have no friends. No one will ever love me again. I have deceived them. My life has been all a lie, and I have been obliged to confess it.”

Then, with sobs and tears, she told the whole story of her ambition and her temptation, and of the false part she had played, depriving another of the advantages that were hers by right, and deceiving those who believed in and fostered her.

Sister Brigida listened to her with the most tender compassion.

“My dear child, I have no doubt you are accusing yourself too much. In any case you are worn out now with sorrow and fatigue, and you must eat and rest before we go any farther into the matter. Whatever your fault may have been, such a passion of penitence will atone for it. Come now and rest in your own old room, and I will bring you food.”

Mattie's head was reeling with exhaustion, her heart wrung with grief and shame, and she was thankful to be taken out of her own hands and fed and put to bed by the merciful Sister, who finished her ministrations with a prayer for a long sleep for the overtired brain.

The prayer was heard; and in the morning Mattie awakened with a clearer mind, a better understanding of her position, and a strong resolution to be worthy in future of the confidence and the generous helpfulness of Sister Brigida, who had permission from her superiors to show her every kindness.

After many long conversations with the Sister, Mattie became more calm, and was able to write a full confession of her fault, with all details, from the very beginning of her temptation to the last miserable days when she had seen discovery coming to meet her, but had not courage to run on before it with an avowal of the truth. The statement was intended for Lady Patrick, and was sent with a letter of farewell and a prayer for forgiveness:

“I only beg that you will think of me no more. I will never see again those whom I have so greatly ill-treated. I have found a refuge here and promise of employment, and I shall have more peace than I have ever known since I began to deceive you. The Mother St. Michael is writing to assure you of the truth of what I say, for, alas! I cannot expect to be believed on my own mere word.

“But I implore you to believe that I am deeply grateful for all the affection and the many bounties you lavished on me. Stine is worthy to belong to you. Her generosity has been a lesson to me, who treated her with so much selfish dishonesty. She will make you happy, and after

a time you will all forget that I ever existed to trouble you. God has been very good to me in bringing me to a refuge in this house of charity and love and usefulness. My whole life must be spent in trying to make amends for the evil I have done."

Lady Patrick and Stine cried together over this letter. Each in her own way, and for her own reasons, felt keenly the miserable condition to which poor Mattie had fallen, not with a deliberate intention, but step by step as a consequence of comparatively slight but uncorrected faults and failings. Lady Patrick thought of her own once hasty conclusions when Mathilde first told her the story of the girl who was saved, and was not allowed to finish the tale she had begun.

"I thought I saw the whole thing at once," she said, "and that the evidence was perfect. Her real fault began, of course, when, after her illness, she allowed the mistake to go on. I ought to have questioned more closely, but the very strangeness of so many coincidences seemed to preclude any suggestion of a flaw in the evidence."

"And I feel," said Stine, "that my own silence, and my readiness to efface all trace of my own identity, made a groundwork for poor Mattie's temptation."

"That was in obedience to the man who had made himself a father to you," said Lady Patrick. "The fault was in Señor Fandango, who was not satisfied in getting you for his own, but did not scruple to separate you from your earlier friends."

"Do not blame him," said Stine. "If we had

never seen him both Mattie and I would probably now be grubbing about in the slums of London. She told me that my sudden lift into prosperity fired her with ambition, and urged her to push up in the world. She meant to 'do it honest', as her poor mother had warned her, but the extraordinary temptations that came in her way were too much for her."

CHAPTER XLVII

A Generous Man

KEEFE, in Paris, was amazed and relieved when a letter from Stine informed him of the strange, unexpected meeting with Mattie in Toledo, and of all that resulted from it. The painful task of making a revelation to Lady Patrick through Mrs. Petworth was no longer required of him. He was not to be the instrument of overwhelming Mattie with disgrace, and driving her out from the home that had received her. Her undoing had been her own act, in the present as in the past, and justice having been done to Stine he, like others who had been concerned in the little drama of her deceit, had nothing but pity for her.

"We are all coming over to Paris," wrote Stine. "Dear old Uncle Fandango has consented to my being lodged with my aunt, Lady Patrick, in the Maison St. Celestin. How strange it is to me to speak of my aunt! She is a dear, affectionate creature, and already seems to love me. It is very sweet to have so much affection; but I cannot get over the feeling that I have robbed poor Mattie of something. Aunt Moya does not yet know of my engagement to you. Mrs. Petworth, who is our stanch friend, has asked me to leave it to her to break the news. 'One blow (the trouble about Mattie) is enough for her at one time,' says this good friend. 'We must

make her intimately acquainted with Keefe, and I think I can assure you that ultimately no obstacle will be put in your way.””

Keefe could not feel quite assured of this, but, knowing Stine as he did, he was convinced that nothing could part them. He had confidence in his own genius and power of work, and was cheered by the fame which his designs in architecture were already bringing him. Lady Patrick was disposed to like him for the active interest he had shown in righting a wrong, and putting in her arms the girl who was really her sister’s child; and she sent him a warm invitation to visit her on her arrival in Paris. But the first perfectly satisfactory meeting between Keefe and Stine was at Mrs. Petworth’s, when Keefe learned all the minutest particulars of her new position and circumstances as Miss Katreen St. Hilary.

“It pains me to be called by that name,” said Stine. “I have asked her to let me still be Stine. But she says I must have her sister’s name, the name my mother gave me.”

“You will always be Stine to me, and for the surname, that will not matter—after a little while,” said Keefe, with a happy laugh. “My father was a gentleman, and his name is a good one.”

“I am afraid poor dear old Uncle Fandango is feeling a little left out in the cold,” said Stine. “He has taken a small flat quite near us, however, and Aunt Moya has begun to understand him better.”

“Oh, he is quite happy already,” said Keefe; “and we will never let him feel lonely. His bitter repining for the loss of his voice has passed away, and his

delight in music has returned. He also finds that many who he fancied had forgotten him are still his friends, and this consoles him greatly. Besides, he is quite assured that I shall always be his son, and that you, though you may be Lady Patrick's niece, will still be his daughter."

Stine now found herself in the midst of experiences new and strange to her, which would have been delightful and amusing but for the consciousness that she was treading the pleasant path already trodden with sore feet by poor Mattie, and for the embarrassment caused by the wonder and curiosity of acquaintances, who were merely informed that a mistake had been made, and that the Miss St. Hilary formerly introduced to society had not been Lady Patrick's niece, as they had supposed her to be.

"Only a distant relative, and gone to live in Italy," said one to another, "so I have heard. Strange that people can make such blunders!"

"Two children were saved from the wreck, I hear," said another gossip, "and the Fitzpatricks got hold of the wrong one at first."

"No, no," said a third; "the other girl was no relative at all, and only one child was saved from drowning. The other was the child of the people who brought her up, and the two got mixed somehow. I hope it is all right at last. The present Miss St. Hilary is much the more charming of the two—so sweet and simple. There was always too much *hauteur* about the first young lady for me, I acknowledge."

So the talk went on. Meanwhile Stine looked on all the fashionable society around her as something

that did not belong to her, and in which she could never find her happiness. Yet life was more full of interest than it had ever been before. She was soon made to feel that she was making her aunt happier than Mattie could ever have done, even if Mattie had been the real niece. Her warm, unselfish nature drew Lady Patrick's heart to her, a generous heart that had often been chilled by the coldness and reserve of the girl whom she had believed to be the daughter of her sister.

Stine, now in possession of the beautiful "princess's chamber" in the Maison St. Celestin, delighted in its historic associations and quaint charm, little knowing what overwhelming temptation, what painful anxiety, what unreal triumph and bitter remorse had been suffered there by the girl whose unfortunate ambition had led her to envy and emulate the high fortunes of her predecessor the princess. In a drawer of that ancient costly bureau had lain the necklace of pearls so long secreted by Mattie with the statement by old Joss Milsom which declared it belonging to Stine.

"Don't ask me to wear it, Aunt Moya," Stine said; "it is too greatly associated with tragedy, first and last. Those pearls would burn my throat. Poor Mattie paid dearly for wearing them on that evening which was the beginning of her temptation."

"After all, they were the means of bringing you to me, assured that you are my own," said Lady Patrick; but the pearls long lay among her own heirlooms, a sacred memento of the sister who had been drowned.

About this time, when the wheels of life were be-

ginning to run smoothly once more, Mrs. Petworth was surprised by a visit from Roberts, who had been absent on a long trip to the East, and had just returned to Paris.

He was looking very grave, and after the first few words of greeting plunged into the subject that was evidently occupying his mind more than any other.

"Can you tell me," he said, "the meaning of a rumour I have heard that the Miss St. Hilary I knew has left Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick and another is in her place? Are there two Miss St. Hilarys, and why is Miss Katreen no longer living with her aunt?"

Mrs. Petworth hesitated. She was troubled at finding herself appealed to as the person who must unfold the history of poor Mattie's downfall to this man who had loved her, and evidently still cared for her with so much fidelity.

"What is the matter?" asked Roberts, struck by the pained expression of her usually placid face. "What has happened to her?"

"She is safe and well, living in Italy," said Mrs. Petworth. "But there are not two Miss St. Hilarys. A mistake was made. You heard the story of the rescue of Lady Patrick's niece from drowning when an infant. Well, it proved that Mathilde—we knew her first as Mathilde—is not that child. The real child of Lady Patrick's sister has been found and is now with her."

"And the girl on whom she lavished so much affection has been discarded because of 'a mistake'?"

"She has retired of her own desire," said Mrs. Petworth,

"Has Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick not room in her heart for two?" asked Roberts.

"She has room for a great many. It is a generous heart that has had its confidence abused."

"By whom?"

"Mathilde has been to blame. I do not wish to complain of her. I would rather you heard the story from another than from me. Have you seen young Kavanagh?"

"I have seen him, but he would tell me nothing. Mrs. Petworth, I insist on knowing the meaning of your insinuations against this young lady. You are well aware of how dear she has been to me, and always will be, no matter what you have to say about her."

"You are a generous man, and you have a right to demand the information that is so painful to me to give you——"

"Speak at once! Do not torture me unnecessarily," said Roberts.

"Mathilde knew that she was not Lady Patrick's niece. She was aware of the existence of the girl whose place she had taken——"

"You represent her as an adventuress, an impostor," said Roberts.

"These are hard words."

"You have implied their meaning. If they be true, how and when was the imposture discovered?"

"By an accident, and recently."

"I do not believe it," said Roberts. "There has been a mistake or a wrong somewhere, but how do I know on which side it really lies? How am I to be assured that the impostor is not the girl I have

seen posing as an art student at Fisher's in Toledo? I was told that she was the niece of a certain Señor Fandango, the famous tenor who lost his voice and retired from the stage. Now it appears she was all the time the niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick. I shall not be satisfied without seeing the proofs of the genuineness of this young lady's claim to oust the other."

"That would not be difficult," said Mrs. Petworth. "But why pain yourself unnecessarily by seeking farther? Better to rest on the assurance of those who know all the facts. It is a long story and I am not inclined to go into all the details of it, nor would it give you any satisfaction to hear them. Pray be content to know that Mathilde is safe, and cared for, and that she is more at peace than she had been for a very long time."

"I am not content," said Roberts. "Can you tell me if Keefe Kavanagh is aware of all the particulars of this miserable business?"

"He is fully aware. Better aware than almost anyone."

"Then I shall go to him," said Roberts. "And pray be sure that no matter what he tells me, I shall not believe one word against the character of the young lady I have known as Miss Katreen St. Hilary."

"Faith like yours ought to do wonders," said Mrs. Petworth. "It has a redeeming power such as works mysteriously in this world of temptation. Go to Keefe Kavanagh."

Roberts wrung her hand and left her abruptly. Keefe was at work in his chambers when Roberts walked in to him.

"Excuse me for interrupting you," he said, "but I cannot sleep till I have heard all the particulars of this intolerable story."

"You mean about Mattie Milsom," said Keefe. "It is not pleasant to talk about."

"Who is Mattie Milsom?"

"The girl who was known for some time as Miss Katreen St. Hilary. What is it to you, Roberts, that you should find it intolerable? Disagreeable it is—but—"

"Utterly intolerable to me," said Roberts. "Have care of what you are going to say, Kavanagh, for I cannot answer for what I may say or do to anyone who brings an accusation of dishonesty against that girl, who has been so hardly treated."

Keefe looked fixedly at his friend and lowered his eyes.

"Then you had better go to her," he said, "and hear all from herself. I do not want to be hard on her, and of all things I do not want to do a hurt to the best friend I ever had, Roberts!"

CHAPTER XLVIII

Urged to Forget

THE first dreadful weeks of Mattie's disgrace and penitence had passed, as all things pass, and she was healthily at work in the busy hospice of San Girolamo.

She had prayed to be allowed to remain as a humble assistant of Sister Brigida, and her prayer had been granted. Care of some of the beautiful rooms was given her, and she swept, and dusted, and polished, and decorated them with thorough good will. In the evenings she sewed for the Sisters and mended the linen of the house, and she was always ready for any of the various small services that might be demanded of her.

In this lowly position she was happier than she had ever been before, and marvelled at the peace that had dropped down on her.

"It is because your conscience is right," said Sister Brigida. "You have confessed your fault and have done all in your power to make amends. You have been pardoned by God and your friends, and the blessing of heaven is now on all your actions."

The early Italian spring was already making the world sweet with flowers, and Mattie was in the garden gathering violets for Sister Brigida to take to

an invalid visitor at the hospice, when she was informed that a gentleman wanted to see her.

"He says he is an intimate friend, and has come on important business," said Sister Brigida, "so Mother has admitted him. You will find him in the little garden parlour."

Mattie felt sick, and trembled with fear of what this might mean. It must be Keefe, who had come to her with some painful news. What did they mean to do with her? She had told them everything.

"I must bear it all," she thought. "I have deserved whatever may come."

She paused a moment with her hand on the door, and then went into the little garden parlour and saw Arthur Roberts waiting for her.

Ah, this was worst of all! Here was the man who had loved her and believed in her, and she had to come before him in her disgrace.

As she stood here with the sunshine from the garden window falling on her, Roberts scarcely recognized the pale girl swathed in a white apron with a little white coif on her head.

She stood quite still with her hand on the door, ready to escape, but he was quickly beside her holding out both his hands.

"You must not take my hand," she said. "You do not know."

"I know that I love you," he said. "Katreen!"

"I am not Katreen. My name is Mattie Milsom."

"I have heard so," said Roberts. "It makes no difference. Mattie is a sweeter little name even than Katreen. Give me your hand, I beg of you. I have come a long way just to talk to you,"

"Had you talked to others you would not have been here," she said. "It would have been kinder to stay away. I am not the person you took me for. I have a bitter story, and it would be less cruel to me if you would hear it from those who were my friends."

"Nothing would induce me to listen to anything against you," said Roberts. "Whatever there is to tell you must tell it to me yourself. I can believe that you made some kind of a mistake; everybody makes mistakes. Whatever it was you have set it right, and why need any more be said about it?"

"You don't understand," said Mattie. "I did not make a mistake. I yielded to a great temptation, wronged another girl, and deceived the people who were good to me."

"And made yourself very unhappy," said Roberts.

"I was unhappy, but not always. Sometimes I enjoyed a sort of wicked triumph. I had been so ambitious and craved so greatly for the good things of the world, and I had got all and more than I had ever dreamed of. But misery was always pursuing me, and got fast hold of me at last."

"I know it," said Roberts. "Don't I remember how sad you were in Ireland? I knew you had some heavy anxiety on your mind—something that you would not tell to anyone. Your friends thought it was all from your state of health. I thought differently. I hoped that the day might come when you would confide in me. And whatever it might be I felt sure that I could help you to get rid of it and could make you happy. Why did you not tell me the whole truth then?"

"I longed to do so," said Mattie, her tears beginning

to fall as the man's tender generosity touched her to the heart and stung her freshly with remorse. "But I could not speak. I had so wound myself in a network of falsehoods that it seemed impossible to break through it. Only that I dared not, with God looking at me, I should have thrown myself in the sea. Often I thought of running away and being heard of no more by anyone who had ever known me. But then cowardice kept me back, for I knew not where to go; and so I went on from day to day till I met Keefe, who used to be Keefe Stonewall."

"And he threatened to expose you?"

"He knew that Stine was the real niece of Lady Patrick Fitzpatrick, and he recognized me as Mattie Milsom. I was wild with despair at being suddenly caught, and then it was that I sank to the lowest depths of dishonesty by stating that I was the foundling and Stine was my father's daughter. I see by your face that you are at last horrified at my wickedness. Go away now, please. I am grateful for your goodness to me, but nothing can make me different from what I am. Even you can find no more excuses for me."

"I can find excuses. You had suffered so much that your brain was overturned. You did not persevere in that statement. Lady Patrick would not have disbelieved you if you had persisted. Your self-accusation was voluntary."

Mattie wept with her face between her hands.

"It is all like a long bad dream," she said. "I can't admit that there was any excuse for me possible, except perhaps that at the moment when I wanted to explain to Lady Patrick that she had jumped to a

wrong conclusion, in thinking I was the child saved from the wreck by my father, she would not listen to me, and I fainted and was ill and not allowed to speak. Hard as it would have been, I should have explained if she had allowed me just at that time. But as hour after hour and day after day passed it grew always more difficult, till at last it seemed impossible."

"I knew there was a blunder somewhere," said Roberts triumphantly. "Impulsive people like Lady Patrick often set things running on wrong lines."

"Oh, but I have been wrong from the beginning, and all the way along!" cried Mattie. "I was vain and selfish, and longing to push myself up in the world. I was envious of Stine, and willing to punish her for her silence after a rich man had taken her away from us her poor friends. I thought she was heartless, when it was I myself who was heartless. I did not mean to steal her pearls, but I kept them by me, telling myself that I was not bound to seek her out in order to hand them over to her. I got to look on them as my own, and to think she must be dead, and to wish I could believe that I was the real foundling and she was my father's child. And so, by thinking of it, I gradually fell into the false position and went down into degradation step by step."

"Now you have told me all," said Roberts, taking her hands gently and drawing them away from her face. "If you have done wrong you have suffered every step of the way. You were left a lonely child to battle for yourself in the world, you had no training, and your very cleverness and laudable ambition led you astray. I can see it all, and can see too how

different it might have been with you if you had begun your life on less difficult lines. It is all over and done with, and you will yet live to be the noble woman you now wish you could always have been."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Mattie. "So Sister Brigida says."

"I know it," said Roberts. "Marry me at once. Trust yourself to the man who loves you. I will take you to America, my own country, away from all these people and associations that remind you of what is painful."

"No, no!" said Mattie. "You speak on impulse. You would act with generosity, but it is impossible that you could ever respect me or trust me. A time would come when you would remember bitterly what you now excuse, and you would feel miserably that you had taken a deceitful woman to be your wife."

"Nonsense!" said Roberts. "I am not a shilly-shally creature of that kind. I know my own mind, and I also thoroughly know the woman I want for my wife. You will be as good as gold and as happy as a queen."

But Mattie could not be persuaded all at once that she would not be doing a further wrong by marrying this man who wanted to lift her up at once at the risk of injury to his own happiness.

"If ever I marry you," she said, "it must be after a long trial—I mean, a trial of your own feelings and wishes. You must take a year at least to think it all over."

"I have thought it all over as much as I shall ever be able to do," said Roberts. "Ever since I heard the first of the story from Mrs. Petworth and Keefe

I have thought of nothing else. If I am to go away now we may never meet again. I may die or you may die, and when the year is up what will be the good of having waited?"

"That will be as God wills," said Mattie. "Even if there is no possibility of change in your view of me and my misconduct, still I must have at least that time to learn much that I was never taught in my early days. Sister Brigida is my teacher now. She is trying to teach me humility and unselfishness, and the charity that thinketh no evil. Give me time to learn; don't hurry me into forgetting my fault. I am young, and nature is strong in me. If I were to go with you now, and plunge into the enjoyment of all the good things of the world that you offer me, vanity and ambition might get the upper hand of my better intentions and resolutions. If after a year you come back to me here——"

"It is too long," said Roberts. "I want you now, and you want me, though you don't think so. I see Sister Brigida out there in the garden. Let us go out and appeal to her judgment. I am sure she will side with me."

So they went and met the Sister with her arms full of flowers, and the case was laid before her.

To the great discontent and disappointment of Roberts, however, she gave her vote in support of Mattie's proposal.

"I think the interval of a year will be good for both of you," she said. "It will strengthen Mattie in body and mind, and make you both more assured of happiness in the future."

"It could not affect me in that way," said Roberts.

"I really believe that," said the Sister, smiling at his honest, earnest face, "but I beg you to leave your future wife with me for the year she pleads for."

The women carried the point, and Roberts was obliged to depart, dissatisfied for the present, but full of hope for the future. And Mattie returned to her tasks beside Sister Brigida, weeping a little as she went, as much with joy, however, for the love that had come to her after all, as with shame for the past that she was so generously urged to forget.

CHAPTER XLIX

Conclusion

WHILE this crisis in Mattie's life was taking place, Stine and Keefe were supremely happy in each other, both for the passing moment and in their prospect of years of happiness to come.

Lady Patrick was learning to respect and admire Keefe. At first she had to struggle with disappointment at finding that her sister's child, restored to her at last after so many difficulties, was not long to remain all her own; but a sense of justice and generosity soon led her to appreciate Stine's fidelity to those who had loved her when she was "nobody's daughter", an ownerless little atom, destitute in the slums of London.

The praises of the young architect which she heard from intellectual persons pleased her greatly, and she was wise enough to prefer honour gained by industry and genius to advantages of noble birth or ready-made fortune. Her consent to the engagement was therefore won before a year was over, a moderate term of waiting was arranged, and the last obstacle to the contentment of the young people was thus absolutely disposed of.

The term of waiting was pleasantly filled by a variety of interesting experiences. It was during that interval that a trip to London was undertaken to visit

the old scenes of their early days, when Keefe was the hard-working and despised builder's boy, consoled by his dreams of the beauty and grandeur possible to constructible things, and by the sympathy of a little ragged girl who understood him better and believed in him more than did anyone else in the world.

Fandango accompanied them, for he too had a desire to see again the spot where a pair of little eager hands had caught at his coat-tails and dragged him from the wheels of a motor. It gave him a fantastic pleasure to take his girl and boy, as he called them, to the very hotel that had harboured himself and Stine after her capture, and where they had met Mrs. Petworth. He shut his eyes to the cruelty of his destruction of Stine's letters, which had cut her off from Keefe and from her other early friends. What was the use of thinking about all that, he thought, since everything had turned out so very well? Only the fortunate happenings of the past were to be dwelt upon now. If he had not been hard to Keefe (so he reasoned), Keefe would not have been urged forward to success by his ambition to meet Stine in the future as a gentleman. And if Keefe Stonewall had not developed into a gentleman, he, Fandango, would never have recognized him later as Keefe Kavanagh, the son of his early friend.

Fandango had indeed recovered his spirits and almost all his faculties for the enjoyment of life, and he was glad to be the leader of this little party of three on a visit to the slums of the East End of London.

They climbed the tenement stairs and found the room where poor Mrs. Milsom had toiled heroically

for her children. There was the bench where she sat doing a "sweater's" work. There was the broken mantelshelf against which the then famous singer leaned while he fulfilled his part of a bargain, and bought up a girl "for a song". At that door had burst in the men from the street, saluting him as Fandango, the famous singer who enthralled and delighted the world!

Now that things had turned out so well, and he had ceased to envy his successors on the stage, it was pleasant to remember that he, too, had once been great and famous. And the young people humoured his fancies, never forgetting how much of their own better fortunes had developed out of the generous impulse of this man in the younger and more prosperous days of his career.

Sib Stonewall was visited, and gave them an enthusiastic welcome; and Sam, the builder, put in his claim as the real founder of the good fortune of the brilliant young architect.

"Always remember, my fine fellow," he said, "that it was in this house you first learned your business. And I wouldn't say but what you would have made a better thing of it if you had stayed here steadily with me. There's plenty of houses to be built in London yet, without your settin' up in Paris —goin' over to the enemy, as a body might put it! But there, don't be frettin' about it; I'll give you a lift yet whenever you're in want of it."

Another and more delightful experience was a visit to Castle O'Dougherty, in the County of Clare. Here the ground travelled so painfully by poor Mattie in her dread of detection and remorse of

conscience was lightly trod by Stine, who was the rightful daughter of this fine old home, a home full of thrilling interest for the girl, who was walking now in her mother's footsteps and looking on her mother's portrait, the eyes of which so strikingly resembled her own.

Keefe could tell her how those eyes had haunted him in the days when he had limped up on his crutch from Granny Cronin's cottage to take a look at the old castle, of which and of the family who had lived in it, and loved it, and deserted it, she had told him so many interesting stories.

The good old woman was triumphant in her rejoicing at having seen at last Miss Katreen's real daughter.

“Wonderful are the ways of the sea!” she said. “What it keeps and what it gives back! But sure it's God Almighty Himself that has His hand in the whole of it!”

Keefe told Stine of how kind she had been to him in his worst days, and showed the cottages he had designed to get a little money, and the spot where he had first met Castellan and Roberts.

Mrs. Petworth, who had as usual accompanied her friends in their visit to Ireland, often felt sad, thinking of Mattie's wrongdoing as she herself had witnessed it without being able at the time to understand it. She thought of Roberts and of the bitter disappointment he must have felt when he learned Mattie's real history from her own lips, as Keefe had informed her he was determined to do before believing that she could be seriously in fault.

“I have not heard anything of him since,” said

Keefe, "but I am certain he went to Italy to see her."

It was while they were still in Ireland that Mrs. Petworth received a letter from Roberts one morning at the breakfast-table.

"Arthur at last!" she said, and the next moment uttered a little cry of surprise. "He has asked Mathilde to marry him!" she exclaimed. "He has learned everything from herself, and makes a thousand excuses for her."

"Has she accepted him?" asked Keefe. "He deserves a better fate."

"You are harder on her than anyone," said Mrs. Petworth.

"Perhaps it is little wonder I should be," said Keefe, looking at Stine. "But has she accepted him?"

"Conditionally, it would appear. He will have to wait a year. He has had great difficulty in persuading her to listen to him at all, but he has absolute faith in her better nature, and is sure of the rectitude of the woman she will yet live to be."

"Good fellow!" said Lady Patrick, her eyes filling with tears. Then she rose suddenly from the table and left the room, overcome by a rush of tender feeling.

"A year is a long time," said Keefe, who had got to wait another year himself before he could claim Stine as his wife. "If she is not to make Roberts happy—the best man God ever created—I hope some providential thing will happen in time to prevent that marriage."

"Oh, Keefe, I shall begin to be afraid of you!" said

Stine. "Why can you not be as forgiving as everyone else?"

"I am not unforgiving," said Keefe, "but Roberts is my friend, and very dear to me. I cannot feel glad that he is to take such a risk."

The fateful year hurried on, and in the midst of their own happiness Stine and Keefe did not forget to think of and pray for the welfare of that other pair whose circumstances were so very unlike their own. Roberts was in America, and some who did not know him well speculated on the chances of his remaining there and leaving Mattie to her seclusion with the Sisters at Fiesole. But long before the probationary term was up Roberts had appeared at the gate of San Girolamo asking to see Miss Milsom, and was admitted by Sister Brigida to the garden parlour.

The marriage in the convent chapel was as private as a marriage could be, and a few days later Mrs. Petworth had a letter from Roberts telling her that he had started from Europe with his wife, on their way to his home in America.

"I trust it is all for the best," said Keefe. "Miss Mattie Milsom is the luckiest girl in the world."

"Except one!" said Stine, laughing. "Now we shall have absolutely nothing to fret about."

The same year saw the wedding of Stine and Keefe, which took place at Castle O'Dougherty, almost as quietly as the marriage at Fiesole. With Lady Patrick's consent Señor Fandango gave the bride away, and after a trip through Ireland to make the native country of her forefathers known to Stine, they repaired to the home in Paris that had been made ready for them.

There is little more to tell about the three young people who began their lives in a slum of the East End of London. So far as those lives have gone as yet all is well with them. Roberts has not been proved wrong in his faith in Mattie's future, and writes to Keefe and to Mrs. Petworth in a spirit of absolute contentment. Keefe and Stine have as yet met with never a crumple in the rose leaf of their happiness, though they are not so silly as to suppose that so perfect a state of things is to continue all their lives. They live, meanwhile, in the midst of loving friends, the Fitzpatricks beside them on one hand and Mrs. Petworth on the other, and a pleasant social and intellectual circle around them. Good old Fandango looks on from a little distance at the happiness and good fortune which he believes was built up chiefly, if not altogether, by himself; while over in London Sam Stonewall tells his friends, as he smokes his pipe, that the most brilliant architect of his day, "wasting his talents over there in Paris, began life in this here workshop, and owes all his success to the man who is talking to you".

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